

# WALTHER

## AND THE

# CHURCH

By  
WM. DALLMANN, W. H. T. DAU,  
and TH. ENGELDER (Editor)

FOREWORD BY  
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and Other States



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## FOREWORD

This book contains, in abridged form, three famous writings of Dr. Walther: *The Voice of Our Church on the Question Concerning the Church and the Ministry*, *The Proper Form of an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation Independent of the State*, and *The Evangelical Lutheran Church the True Visible Church of God on Earth*. The theses presented by Walther in these works, with their proofs from Scripture, are reproduced in essential completeness. The economy of space, however, demanded the exclusion of almost all the imposing array of corroborative citations culled by Walther from the Lutheran Confessions and from the writings of Luther and other recognized teachers of the Church. (Synod's Literature Board, which initiated the publication of this book, was chiefly concerned about making the doctrinal statements of Walther in these works accessible in English to as many readers as possible. It therefore resolved in the interest of wide distribution to offer the gist of all three in one small volume.)

Each of the three theologians who have collaborated in the production of this book has contributed an original essay on Walther. Dr. W. H. T. Dau, who translated *The Voice of Our Church Concerning the Question of the Church and the Ministry*, wrote the "Appraisal of Walther," Dr. Th. Engelder, who translated *The Proper Form of an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation Independent of the State* furnished the article entitled "Walther a Christian Theologian," and Dr. Wm. Dallmann, who translated *The Evangelical Lutheran Church the True Visible Church of God on Earth*, contributed the essay "Walther's Respect for the Congregation."\*

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\* The work of Prof. Th. Laetsch, who read the manuscript censorially and offered many valuable suggestions, is hereby gratefully acknowledged. — Ed.

The three collaborators were students of Dr. Walther, belonging to the last class graduated under Walther at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, in 1886. Faithfully following in the footsteps of their esteemed teacher, they have labored in the Church with success for over fifty years, serving as pastors of large congregations, as occupants of important synodical offices, or as professors at our higher schools. All three are widely known as talented authors.

This book is published for the purpose of commemorating the arrival of the Saxon immigrants one hundred years ago, which marked the beginning of the work of our Church in this God-blessed land. The book seeks to keep alive in our memory the precious legacy handed down to us by our fathers. It will stir up in our hearts due appreciation of the wealth to which we have fallen heir and incite us to make fuller use of our rich inheritance. Especially our pastors should give close study to these pages both in private and in conferences. However, the book is meant not for pastors only but for all members of our Church. The writings of Walther here appearing in English were originally presented not to Walther's theological classes or to pastoral conferences but to synodical conventions made up one half of lay delegates. And when they first appeared, they were eagerly read by many of our congregation-members, thus helping to rear a laity well grounded in Scriptural principles. In the origin of these writings lies the suggestion that portions of this book be discussed at our synodical sessions during the centennial year and, furthermore, that our pastors draw on this rich material for presentation to their people in Sunday services, in congregation-meetings, and in other gatherings, and that they encourage their people to buy and study this book.

The doctrines and principles laid down in the first two writings on *The Church and the Ministry* and *The*

*Proper Form of an Ev. Lutheran Congregation* are still quite generally in active force in our circles; but it is to be feared that here and there they prevail as fixed traditions without real appreciation of their innate glory. So, too, our people still hold with Walther that our Lutheran Church is the true visible Church, but many simply repeat what they have been told from childhood without being able to prove their position. We all need the instruction offered in this book to quicken our Lutheran consciousness, to open our eyes to the beauties of our inheritance. Understanding and appreciation lead to full enjoyment.

Unquestionably the most important of the three classics offered the reader is the one which treats the questions relative to the Church and the Ministry. This work was born in the throes of dire travail among the Saxon immigrants and in the bitter controversy on these matters into which they were early forced by Pastor Grabau and the Buffalo Synod. The book is really only the expansion of the so-called Altenburg Theses and thus recalls the first doctrinal controversy which tried and tested our fathers shortly after they had settled in Perry County and St. Louis.

Our fathers had been persuaded by Pastor Stephan to leave their homeland in the expectation that in America, under their trusted leader, they would find room and liberty to practise their faith in unruffled happiness. They believed that the visible Church congregated about Stephan was the only true Church existing at that time, that God's grace was offered only through the ministerial office held by Stephan and his copastors, and that only those who were obedient to this ministry constituted the flock of Christ and, together with the ministry, formed His Church. Stephan's ambitious structure collapsed, and chaos ensued. The Church had been identified with Stephanism. Where, now, was the Church? The pastors

doubted the validity of their office, and their members doubted the efficacy of the ministerial acts of their pastors. God did not forsake His flock. God's chosen human instrument emerged to lead the Saxons out of despair and, at the same time, to become the means of larger blessings to the entire Lutheran Church. This was Pastor Ferdinand Walther. He had gone through the hard school of spiritual trials. Through diligent study of the writings of Luther and of the Lutheran Confessions he had accumulated an unusual store of solid theological knowledge. He, too, had been strongly influenced by Stephan but had never subscribed to Stephan's hierarchical designs. In the year of 1841 a memorable meeting was held at Altenburg, Missouri. For this meeting Walther had prepared eight theses on the disputed questions pertaining to the Church and the Ministry. As already stated, these theses contain the same truths which were later set forth more elaborately in *The Voice of Our Church on the Question Concerning the Church and the Ministry*. In the Altenburg Debate Walther completely routed the opposition. Confused and erring consciences were comforted and set aright. New life began to pulsate within the Saxon congregations.

Almost coincident with the epochal Altenburg Debate was the beginning of the controversy with Grabau, which was to continue for a quarter of a century and end in a signal triumph of the truth. Grabau taught that the Church is a visible community, made up of two states, the ecclesiastical and the domestic, the first with the duty to teach and govern, the second with the duty to hear and obey the former. Even in matters morally indifferent the hearers owe obedience to their pastors. Furthermore, only the pastors have the right to pass judgment on doctrine. Again, congregations have no right to call any man as pastor except one who has been divinely ordained by the laying on

of the hands of accredited clergymen. The official acts of one not so ordained are invalid.

Walther, on the other hand, shows that the Church in the proper sense of the word is the communion of saints, the sum total of all true believers. To these Christ has given the keys of heaven. In this body of true believers has He vested the spiritual, divine, and heavenly goods, privileges, powers, and offices which He has won for His Church. And it is the local Christian congregation which has the right and the power to call pastors and shepherds, who in the name of the congregation are to administer publicly the means of grace.

We must recognize the providential guidance of God in the circumstance that at the very beginning of our church-life in America the Church was forced to pay attention to the correct teaching concerning the Church and the Ministry, a teaching which had long been obscured but now again, through Walther, found clear expression, conformable both to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. The numerous congregations which sprang into existence could thus from the very start establish their church-life according to correct Scriptural principles and so define the mutual relations between pastors and congregations as to bar all hierarchical pretensions on the part of the clergy as well as all arbitrary domination on the part of the congregation. It must be granted that the separation of Church and State in America favored the creation of a sound congregational policy, but it must not be forgotten that in spite of this constitutional provision the majority of American church-bodies are established on hierarchical principles. This was true also of the Lutheran bodies antedating the arrival of Walther.

The second writing of Walther presented to the reader of this book, *The Proper Form of an Evangelical*

*Lutheran Congregation Independent of the State*, aims to give the practical application of the principles laid down in the former work. From all sides, especially from Germany, voices were heard declaring that Walther's assertion of the dignities and rights of all true believers must necessarily lead to anarchy and mob-rule within the Church. In 1851 Walther and Wyneken visited Germany, and on this occasion, in a lengthy address to the Lutheran Church in Germany, they described the beautiful relations between pastor and people prevailing in their American congregations as a result of the clear understanding and proper application of the Scriptural doctrine of the Church and the Ministry. They declared: "Among us the pastor does not lord it over the flock nor the flock over the pastor, but God's Word is sovereign over both. . . . And so, thanks to God, we find in our more advanced congregations the lovely spectacle of the people's showing the same zeal in guarding the freedom and the right of the ministry as shown by the pastors in guarding the rights of the congregation. And the less our pastors aim to inspire awe and fear as task-masters and lords, the more are they loved and revered as fathers, teachers, and shepherds." (Hochstetter, *Die Geschichte der Missourisynode*, p. 225.)

In the foreword to this second writing Walther says: "The book entitled *The Voice of Our Church on the Question Concerning the Church and the Ministry*, which appeared eleven years ago, contained the doctrinal principles which are basic for establishing in proper form a local church independent of the State. (The purpose of the present book is to set forth the practical application of these doctrines and to show that they do not lead to conditions of anarchy, mob-rule, Anabaptistic independentism, and disorder,—it has been frequently asserted that such conditions must inevitably result from these teach-



ings,—but rather form the firm foundation upon which a local church may build itself in proper form. . . . Finally let it be said that the reader is herewith not offered something new and untried, some haphazard experiment in church-organization; but a form of organization is presented which has existed here for twenty-four years and under which, by God's grace, a large and ever-increasing number of congregations, firmly united in one faith and confession and bound together, also outwardly, in the work of love, have been, and are being, built up and find themselves richly blessed."

In sixty-six theses Walther shows what are the rights and the duties of a local church and how these rights and duties are to be exercised. The picture presented shows a large and glorious range of activities, embracing all things that serve the spiritual welfare of the congregation and the extension of God's kingdom. In these activities all members of the congregation have a share, conditioned by their calling and station in life, and in the performance of these duties their faith is to find expression and vindication.

We have need to study this writing of Walther in our day. The modern multiplication of church societies is attended by the danger that the activities belonging to the congregation are made the business of societies and that congregation-members gradually show more interest in, and zeal for, the work of the society than for that of the congregation, with the result that the congregation steadily loses in importance and prestige. In this book Walther makes mention of not a single congregational society, showing his conviction that societies are not essential to a congregation established in proper form. It is true, Walther was not opposed to societies within the Church. He himself founded and fostered such in his own congregation, for example, a young people's society and a ladies' aid.

But he saw to it that these societies remained under the control of the congregation and that they did not encroach upon the congregation's business.

Walther teaches us that the Christian congregation is the society founded by God within and through which Christians are to function conjointly as kings and priests of God in performing the work of the Church. From early youth our Christians must be trained to become congregation-minded, so that membership in the congregation means more to them than membership in a church society. This applies also to our synodical life. Synod is a union of congregations; hence to function properly, it must do its work through the individual congregation.

The third writing of Walther condensed in this book is entitled *The Evangelical Lutheran Church the True Visible Church of God on Earth*. In this work Walther, as a valiant and loyal knight, rises in defense of the honor of his dear Church. Through rationalism and unionism our Church, on both sides of the Atlantic, had become "as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city," Is. 1:8. Lutheran pastors and congregations were blind to her glory and regarded her as standing on a level with the sectarian churches.

Walther shows that the Lutheran Church is the true visible Church of God on earth because it is the Church of the pure Gospel and Sacraments. In no other church-body is the Gospel being preached in complete purity, nor are the Sacraments administered in conformity with the Scriptural standard; and so, at the present time, the Lutheran Church must be viewed as the only true visible Church.

The treasure of the pure Gospel committed to the Lutheran Church was esteemed by our fathers above all else in the world, and it was their ardent wish and prayer to transmit this treasure intact to their pos-

terity. How appropriate therefore that in our centennial year we should give ear to the voice of Walther as he unfolds the glories of our Church! Grateful appreciation of our treasures will safeguard us against the temptation to surrender aught of our inheritance; it will cause us to shun the unionistic movements so popular in our day, which seek to build the Church through external fellowship amid internal discord; it will serve to increase our eagerness to apprehend and our zeal in the pursuit of our great task, that of carrying the pure Gospel to the nations. Our Savior says: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more," Luke 12:48. "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit shall abide," John 15:16.

As these writings of Walther now go forth on their way through the Church in the English garb, may they have the same measure of success in the present generation as when they first appeared in German dress in the middle of the past century! May God the Holy Ghost bless this testimony unto His glory and the salvation of many souls! F. PROTENHAUER

Chicago, Ill., August 10, 1938

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# Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, D. D.

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## AN APPRAISAL

### 1. Providential Orderings

October 25, 1811, has become a great day in the annals of the Walther family in Saxony, when the most illustrious scion of a race of Lutheran pastors extending back at least three generations first saw the light of this world at Langenchursdorf in the Muldetal as the eighth child and fourth son of Pastor Gottlob Heinrich Wilhelm Walther and his wife Johanna Wilhelmina, *née* Zschenderlein, daughter of the honorable keeper of the *Ratskeller* of the city of Zwickau.

It might have turned out otherwise.

Though reared in a God-fearing home, Walther grows up after his eighth year and receives his primary and secondary education in rationalistic surroundings, without a Bible or a catechism of his own, supported merely by the human faith inculcated upon him in his boyhood by his pious father that the Scriptures are the Word of God. Three years old, he had confessed "Jesus' blood and righteousness" under the Christmas-tree to the joy of his father; but fifteen years later — so he confessed in his old age — he is still "unconverted" in his college (*Gymnasium*) days at Schneeberg, "finds his Savior" in 1829, and begins to read Acts for its "examples of unmovable faith," from a Bible bought with an unexpected thaler from his father.

When ready to enter the University of Leipzig, he "feels himself born for nothing else than music," and it is only his father's determined refusal of such a career for his son that turns him to theology.

By joining a group of legalistic Pietists, he wants to make himself by his own holy endeavors a perfect Christian and is reduced to spiritual despair, only to be lifted out of his gloom by the very man whom he afterwards has to help depose.

He comes home from the university mortally ill with a bronchial or lung affection, and when doctors' skill fails,

an ordinary home remedy and a loving mother's nursing restore him. But during that winter semester 1831—32, which he has to skip at the university, he discovers Luther's Works in his father's library and devours them. Would he have had the incentive and the leisure for this study at Leipzig? Very likely not.

In a spiritually run-down congregation at Braeunsdorf he serves a brief pastorate and is plainly blessed in his ministry, spite of rationalistic opposition and government interference. But he resigns it "with a heavy heart" to join the emigration organized by Pastor Stephan because he, too, hopes to work in peace in America.

He arrives at Bremerhaven with a stigma put upon him by the Saxon government, which would discredit the emigration of the "Stephanists" in every way: letters of arrest have been published against him in which he is charged with abducting two children from their parents. He has to change his passage on the *Amalia*, for which he is booked, to the *Johann Georg* because this ship is ready to sail, and one of the passengers is willing to let Walther take his place and sail under his name. The *Amalia* later is lost at sea.

Physical hardships and spiritual distress await him on his arrival in America. He is not in robust health when he begins his pastorate in Perry County, where he helps to start the famous log-cabin college, and in St. Louis, where he fashions the mother church of Missouri Lutheranism into shape. Heavy, heavy, is the task put upon him here, and it is made heavier when he starts his literary career with the publication of the *Lutheraner*; still heavier when he is made the first President of the Missouri Synod, which he succeeds in organizing in 1847; still heavier when he is made the first president and theological professor of the log college that has been moved from Perry County to St. Louis and starts its illustrious career as Concordia Seminary; but heaviest of all by a series of fierce controversies with other Lutherans, which fill his day with anxiety and bitterness. Several times he is so exhausted that relaxation is forced upon him because he will not spare himself. He is nearly drowned in the Mississippi River. He collapses after a convention in Milwaukee.



However, he comes out of all these afflictions unharmed, yea, closer to the heart of God. There has been much rough-hewing of human plans but more divine directing in his arduous progress through life. When we think of it all now that it is over, we remember Ps. 37:23: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and He delighteth in his way."

Walther has been a product of providential guiding and fashioning, and one of those "gifts of the Lord for the edifying of the body of Christ" of whom Paul has spoken in Eph. 4:11-16.

## 2. Ex Occidente Lux!

(Light from the West)

Had their leader's object not been to seek seclusion, isolation, in a thinly populated locality in the then Far West, that could be reached directly via New Orleans and the Mississippi, thus avoiding the tedious overland travel from the Atlantic seaboard, the logical port of entry to America for the colonists of Pastor Stephan would have been Baltimore, where Wyneken had landed the year before, or New York, where Ernst, Buerger, Sihler, Craemer, and others landed soon after. Nearly everywhere, from Albany to Savannah, they would have found well-established settlements of Lutherans a few miles inland from the coast. They could have followed the westward trek which was taking their coreligionists to Pittsburgh, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan, and they could have joined Lutheran organizations already existing.

As it was, the reverse occurred. Amidst his parish-work in Trinity Congregation and its branches Walther was pondering ways and means of publishing at least three or four issues of a church-paper that would present the true face of genuine Lutheranism to the world, without the false faces that had been put on it in Europe and America. He had his wish in September, 1844, when with the aid of his parishioners he could launch *Der Lutheraner* upon its remarkable career. Its publication, suddenly flaring up like a strange light on the Western horizon, amazed the Lutheran Church here and abroad. It proved a revealer of the thoughts in many minds: it repelled many; it attracted others who rejoiced to know that there

were still Lutherans in the world besides themselves. So, notably, Wyneken. Its first great achievement, two and a half years after its publication, was the consolidation of a small group of kindred minds into the organization of the synodlet of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, which promptly made *Der Lutheraner*, which had brought them together, its official organ and has kept it such till this day.

When Walther became Synod's theological professor at Concordia Seminary in January, 1850, and five years later, when he began the publication of the learned theological monthly *Lehre und Wehre*, two other powerful instruments had been forged for disseminating the principles of Lutheranism and the Biblical warrant for its pure doctrine. Not only in America but also in Europe and Asia pastors, professors, and laymen were poring over Walther's publications, not always with delighted approval, but always with intense interest. The publications became mighty quickeners of dormant, and invigorators of aroused, consciences. At the same time Walther poured into his growing classes of students not only a wealth of information but, best of all, his own spirit of faithful, unflinching, uncompromising devotion to the eternal verities of God's Word and Lutheran doctrine pure. A remarkable *esprit de corps* was developed already in their student days among the graduates of Concordia. They went out to do — and did — resolutely what they had been taught. When they met their old professor again at conventions where he presided, and when they heard him discuss doctrinal and practical issues before the Church, it seemed to them as if they were taking a postgraduate course in theology under him, the fruits of which they utilized in their parishes and mission-fields.

Thus to the original light that had come almost alone from Walther there was added an ever-increasing voltage, and its radiation spread to the other Lutheran bodies from the West to the East and across both oceans that lap the American shores. The determining influence for pure, unalloyed Lutheranism was definitely placed in the West, and the Lutheran center of gravity lies today somewhere near a line running from St. Louis to Milwaukee and to the Twin Cities.

### 3. "The Intrepid and Unselfish Warrior"

Walther never *started* a controversy. Nevertheless in his time he was the great Lutheran controversialist. One reason for this was that he had been chosen to teach dogmatics, amongst other things, at Concordia Seminary, where he taught classes for thirty-six years. For his models he took, besides the great prophet of Lutheranism, Luther, the dogmaticians of the palmy days of the Church of the Reformation. These teachers believed that the Holy Scriptures have been given, not only "for doctrine" and "for instruction in righteousness," but also "for reproof" and "for correction." So they gave, alongside of their thetical, or positive, statements, antitheses, in which divergent, heretical teachings were registered from apostolic times down to their own age. Quenstedt, for this reason, has called his dogmatics *Theologia DIDACTICO-POLEMICA*.

Walther chose for his text-book Baier's little Latin *Compend of Positive Theology*. He enlarged this treatise by dictating to his students copious excerpts from the writings of Luther and the dogmaticians. When this enlarged edition was published in 1879,—the most stupendous product of Concordia Publishing House up to that time—the little octavo volume of Baier had grown to six times its size, and few, if any, of the antitheses of Quenstedt had been omitted from its four lexicon octavo volumes. Missouri Synod pastors thus came to be trained not only in the knowledge of the right way but also in resistance to every false way.

However, another kind of polemics was developed by Walther's life-task of restoring the pure teaching of Lutheranism. It is this that made him feared and admired, famous and detested, here and abroad. But these controversies hurt Walther as much as his opponents, if not more, because they arrayed him against members of his own dear Lutheran Church. It cut Walther to the quick when, instead of joining the Lutheran Buffalo Synod, he had to expose the Romanizing tendency of its leader and chief spokesman. He was deeply wounded by the defection, because of millenarian notions, of one of his earliest coworkers in Perry County. Great anxiety seized him at the threatened loss of the most energetic

supporter in Germany of his labors for the Lutheran Church in America. He did not shun a tedious ocean trip to avert a break with this brother by a personal conference with him; and when the break came after all, he was profoundly saddened. But the most unkindest cut of all came at the end of his life when he was thrown into his most terrific controversy with men who had worked side by side with him in the upbuilding of the greatest and staunchest Lutheran church-body in America.

A glimpse of Walther's heartache during these years of fightings without and fears within is given us by a remark in a letter to Dr. Franz Delitzsch: "Believe me, in my polemics I very often experience what Joseph did, who spoke harshly to his brethren but then went into his chamber to have a hearty cry and had to wash his face before he could venture forth again in public." Walther trembled when he informed the convention of 1850 that they were confronted with something worse than a bloody persecution, namely, a temptation to adopt false doctrine. When the predestinarian controversy burst upon him, he bowed in grief at the shaking that was to be given to his life-work.

Nothing but the sense of duty, the solemn obligation of confessorship of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, above all, the unflinching defense of the free grace and the full grace of God for the salvation of fallen man, prompted and upheld Walther in these strifes. "Thus God has spoken! Thus God wants men to believe and teach!" — over against this consideration every other reflection vanished, and with a palpitating heart Walther took up the conflict fearlessly, even against such practical issues as usury, dancing, and the theater.

What Edward Everett has called Washington, Walther was in his own domain. He was not only intrepid but also unselfish. No motive of self-glory or self-aggrandizement is discoverable in his activities. For filthy lucre's sake he never worked. He refused compensation for his literary products. He declined large gifts. He accepted the doctor title under a sort of moral compulsion.

It hurt Walther when during a public discussion a speaker remarked: "When Walther has spoken, there is no use of any one else's speaking." Perhaps there was

a barb in that remark, but in itself it was true. Walther traveled somewhat alone on his high plane. He had many devoted followers, many sincere admirers, but he had no equal. In a whole sierra of Lutheran confessors he stands out like a Mount Whitney or Mount Shasta.

#### 4. September 9, 1883

The class which entered Concordia Seminary in the fall of 1883 — the last class that completed its school studies in theology under Walther — witnessed an unforgettable scene on the Sunday before the opening of school. On their arrival they entered a magnificent brand-new structure, with commodious spick-and-span apartments and equipments. The building was the outstanding landmark in that entire, still somewhat rural, region and the pride of South St. Louis. This building was dedicated on September 9.

Walther had helped to found the rude log college of the Saxon fathers in Perry County in 1839. His congregation in St. Louis, together with the congregation in Altenburg, had donated this school, a building site outside the St. Louis city limits, and an operating fund to the Missouri Synod a decade later, and Walther had dedicated that new college and seminary, section by section, in 1850 and the years following. The rapid expansion of the Missouri Synod in the midst of all its conflicts had made it necessary to wreck this building and to erect on the same site a new Concordia Seminary.

The day of its dedication became the gala day in the life of the aging Walther. A beautiful fall day greeted the vast throng of 20,000 worshipers, who found seats and standing-room before the rostrum that had been erected in front of the north wing of the Seminary. Thousands of these had come from every part, even remote parts, of Synod. Extra trains for the occasion had been run to St. Louis from Chicago, Milwaukee, Fort Wayne, and Pittsburgh. The Lutheran synods federated with the Missouri Synod had sent delegations of illustrious representatives.

Visibly moved, the orator of the day, Walther, ascended the pulpit. At the corner-stone laying on October 1, 1882, he had said: "Nearly thirty-three years ago, on Novem-

ber 8, 1849, on this identical spot, the corner-stone was laid of a building which was to receive into its narrow rooms a twofold nursery of future servants of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. That building, safely completed with the help of God in seven months and solemnly dedicated to the Lord on June 11, 1850, was enlarged from time to time. Having served its sacred purpose thirty-two years, it vanished months ago from the ground. Not fiery flames devoured it; neither did floods of water carry it away nor wind-storms overthrow it. We ourselves took it down to make room on this old hallowed spot for a new and greater structure. To do this, we were not prompted by cravings arising in us after great things. Nay, as in days past to Israel by the prophet Isaiah, so God has called to us by His blessing on our work: 'Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations.' The old building could no longer contain the ever more abundant blessing that was being poured out upon us. If we were not, in unpardonable surfeit, to say to God: 'Heavenly Father, restrain Thy blessing upon us,' or if we were not, by base ingratitude, to squander the blessing of our God that has flowed in upon us, we *had to* procure a larger vessel to hold this blessing."

Now, in his dedicatory address, speaking with unusual strength and vigor, Walther said: "We cannot and will not deny that today our hearts are surging with joy when we reflect that the institution which was begun forty-four years ago in a miserable block hut amidst a forest, is today moving into a palace in the midst of a metropole. However, as a living eye- and ear-witness I can here testify that our little block hut, too, seemed to us a palace, which we entered at that time not less joyfully than we enter this magnificent edifice today. Our poverty in those days was so great that even that little block hut rose before our eyes like a miracle, for which we could thank God only with tears of joy. Therefore, nay, nay, my brethren! It is not the magnitude and stateliness of this new structure nor the vainglory that *we* have built it, which furnishes the true, the real reason for our joy today; but there is an entirely different one."

To his rapt, sometimes emotionally shaken listeners Walther now developed this thought: "The true, the real,

reason of our festive joy today is none other than this threefold one:

"1. The final purpose which this new structure is to serve (the dispensing, not of earthly, but of heavenly wisdom).

"2. The circumstances which made it necessary (the growth of the Missouri Synod's work).

"3. The love which, single-handed, has erected and adorned this structure." (Nearly the entire cost of it had been collected before the building was started.)

The building was also the Missouri Synod's tribute to their great teacher and leader and to his life-work. Here he finished his labors. The surviving members of his last class still remember his impressive, gripping lectures, *Lutherstunden*, and the few sermons which he preached in his *Gesamtgemeinde* (joint congregation of Trinity, Immanuel, Zion, and Holy Cross). There was no change and no abatement of the old spirit of loyalty to God's Word and Luther's doctrine.

But he was gradually casting off the cables that bound him to earth, winding up a series of synodical papers begun thirteen years before, attending conferences, District conventions, and a Synodical Conference convention. On August 23, 1885, he knelt at the bier of his faithful companion, Emily, *née* Buenger, whom he found in the backwoods of Perry County and who had gone with him through strife and storm for forty-four years. His vacation in 1886 was spent with his children and grandchildren in New York and Cleveland.

Then came the end. The Seminary authorities insisted that their enfeebled professor cease his routine work. The year after the dedication of the Seminary, the Delegate Convention had met in its *aula*. At its next convention in Fort Wayne the news was brought to the delegates of the great teacher's home-going on May 7, at 5:30 P. M. They asked that his interment be deferred till May 17 that they might attend it—the greatest *cortège* which St. Louis had witnessed.

September 9, 1883, was for Walther the day on Pisgah Height, where God showed to His servant the greater glory in the Church Triumphant after he should have finished his able work in the Church Militant. W. H. T. D.

## Walther a Christian Theologian

Dr. C. F. W. Walther meant much to his generation. Shortly after his death Dr. F. W. Stellhorn wrote: "The Lutheran Church of our country, yes, I may say, of this whole century, owes more to Dr. Walther than to any other single person." (*Luth. Kztg.*, June 1, 1887.) The fifty years that have elapsed since his last illness ended his work at the Seminary, on November 3, 1886,<sup>1</sup> have not diminished his influence among us. We have been living on his theology. And the present generation cannot afford to dispense with it. There is a great blessing in store for those who make Dr. Walther's theology their own.

What characterizes this theology? The two elements that form the essence of Christian theology shaped the teaching and work of Dr. Walther. God gave the Synodical Conference three great theologians, says the *Theologische Quartalschrift* (1931, p. 198), Walther, Hoenecke, Pieper, who infused into their pupils the spirit of the *sola Scriptura* and the *sola gratia*. These two things Dr. Walther himself named as the outstanding characteristic of the theology which he and his brethren stood for. He said at a synodical jubilee: "We have adhered, first, to the supreme principle of all Christianity, that the canonical books of the Old and the New Testament are, from the first to the last letter, the inspired Word of the great God, the only rule and norm of faith and life, of all doctrine and all teachers, and the supreme judge in all religious controversies. Next we have adhered to the second supreme principle of our truly evangelical Church, that the article of the justification of the poor sinner before God by grace alone, for the sake of Christ alone, and therefore through faith alone, is the chief fundamental article of the whole Christian religion, with which the Church stands and falls." (*Brosamen*, p. 556.)

First, then, Walther was a Bible theologian. That is the first reason why we call him a Christian theologian.

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1) The present writing is an extension of the address delivered at the graduation exercises at Concordia Seminary, June 5, 1936. See *Conc. Theol. Monthly*, 1936, p. 731 ff.



The two terms are synonymous. No theology can claim to be Christian theology which is not drawn directly from Scripture. And a theologian who offers his own opinion as divine truth or who is not sure whether the teaching which he has drawn from the Bible is, because it is a Biblical teaching, God's truth, has no standing in the Christian Church. Dr. Walther was a Bible theologian. He stood for the Scripture principle, the *sola Scriptura*,—the written Word of the Bible the supreme and sole authority in theology and in the Church,—and for its complementary, the great doctrine of the verbal, plenary, inspiration of Holy Scripture. He was raised up by God at a time when the majority of the theologians throughout the world were laboring to tear the Church from her moorings and set her adrift on the treacherous sea of human opinion and human authority. He was one of the few prophets of his day who raised the cry "To the Law and to the Testimony!" Is. 8:20; one of the few who reassured the wavering children of God: This is the Testimony; this is the Word of your God: the written word of Scripture.

From first to last he bore faithful witness to this fundamental truth. He was ever alive to the need of warning the Church of the disastrous results of the denial of the verbal, plenary, inspiration of Scripture. In the very first volume of *Lehre und Wehre* (1855, p. 248) he uttered this warning. Turning against the prominent Lutheran theologian Kahnis, who had written: "Protestantism stands and falls with the principle of the sole authority of Scripture, but the dogma of the inspiration of Scripture as taught in the old dogmatics has nothing to do with this principle; you cannot revive this old dogma without hardening yourself against the truth," Walther declared: "We must confess that we were dismayed when we read these words. Who will want to aline himself with a new theology which claims to be a legitimate development of the old Lutheran theology but departs from it in the fundamental doctrine of the principle of theology, in the doctrine of Scripture, of the *ratio formalis Scripturae*, of that which constitutes the essence of Scripture?" And the last article but one which he wrote for *Lehre und*

*Wehre*, the foreword for the year 1886, dealt with this denial of the real inspiration of Scripture. It closed with the words: "*Wehe uns, wenn wir dazu schwiegen! Dann muessten die Steine schreien. Erbarme sich Gott seiner armen Christenheit in dieser letzten, betruieben und gefaehrlichen Zeit!*" Matters had grown worse in the Church. At that time even some of the more conservative theologians in Germany were ridiculing the verbal inspiration and the absolute inerrancy of Scripture, and their following in America was growing. Seeing the need of the times, Dr. Walther devoted the *Lutherstunde* from November 27, 1885, to June 4, 1886, to an exhaustive study of the doctrine of inspiration. The first sentence that fell from his lips was: "With the Biblical doctrine of the inspiration of Holy Scripture stand and fall the certainty, truth, and divine character of Scripture itself and of the entire Christian religion." He set out to discuss his subject under six heads, of which the first was: "What does Scripture itself say concerning its origin and authority?" and the last: "Why must we, as we value God's grace and our own salvation, adhere to the pure doctrine of the inspiration of Holy Scripture and refuse to yield one jot and tittle of it?"

Walther would not give up one tittle of the doctrine of the verbal, plenary, inspiration of the Scriptures. Why? For one thing, the Bible plainly teaches it. It is an important doctrine because it is a Bible doctrine. But there is another consideration. The supreme importance of this doctrine lies in its relation to Scripture as the source and norm of all doctrine. If Scripture is not given by inspiration, if it is not, in the actual, plain meaning of the term, God's Word, it cannot serve as the source and norm of doctrine. If human weakness and fallibility inhere in the Bible in any form or degree, no man is going to submit to it unconditionally, no Christian will be able to base his faith upon it. As Walther pointed out in his first pronouncement in *Lehre und Wehre*, the denial of the inspiration of Scripture is destructive of the very *ratio formalis Scripturae*; it takes away that which makes Scripture what it is; for Scripture is the Word of God because of its being inspired of God. And a non-inspired or only par-

tially inspired Bible is useless. You will need some other authority to tell you how much of what the Bible says is true. You will have to make reason — bald reason or reason masquerading in Christian dress (“the pious self-consciousness,” “the religious experience”) — the source or at least the norm of Christian doctrine. You will have to rely on your own judgment and your human experience to guide you in the search for truth. “If the original Scriptures were not inerrant, the whole record is rendered untrustworthy; you do not know what to believe or what to reject; the feeling of uncertainty becomes at once so great that you lose your spiritual power and unction and can no longer look upon any portion of Scripture as the true and absolute Word of God. Then, instead of making God’s Word the ultimate rule and standard, you must either make reason that standard, in which case you have rationalism, or else you make subjective experience the arbiter, in which case you open the flood-gates of false mysticism.” (Dr. L. S. Keyser, in the *Lutheran Church Review*, Jan. 1905.)

Mark these words: If you repudiate the inspiration and absolute trustworthiness of all Scripture, taking the “Christian self-consciousness” or “experience” or whatever you want to call it, for your guide, “the feeling of uncertainty becomes at once so great that you lose your spiritual power and unction.” You lose both the certainty of doctrine and the assurance of faith. The “monster of uncertainty” rules. For Christian certainty rests on the authority of Scripture, and the authority of Scripture rests on its inspiration. And mark these words: “The Church of the Reformation stands on the rock of Holy Scripture, on the *sola Scriptura*. But she stands there, and can stand there, *only* because she identifies Scripture with God’s Word.” (Dr. F. Pieper, *Lehre und Wehre*, 1928, p. 14.) Some refuse to take this position. They will not admit that all the words of Scripture, all Scripture, are the inspired Word of God. They refuse to equate the Scriptures and the Word of God. But mark well: “If the Lutheran Church in America is not minded to give admittance to the *monstrum incertitudinis*, she must repudiate this position.” (L. c.)

Walther emphasized these points again and again. Mark his words: "It is absolutely necessary that we maintain the doctrine of inspiration as taught by our orthodox dogmaticians. If the possibility that Scripture contained the least error were admitted, it would become the business of *man* to sift the truth from the error. That places *man over Scripture*, and Scripture is *no longer* the source and norm of doctrine. Human reason is made the *norma* of truth, and Scripture is degraded to the position of a *norma normata*. The least deviation from the old inspiration doctrine introduces a rationalistic germ into theology and infects the whole body of doctrine." (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 1888, p. 196.)

This matter is of such vital importance that it will bear repeating. In an article entitled *Die Inspirationslehre in der lutherischen Kirche Amerikas* Dr. F. Bente declared—and let the reader weigh his words and judge whether he is using extreme language—: "It may at first sight look like an unwarranted statement, but it is actually so: the denial of the doctrine of inspiration overthrows the Christian theology. The Christian doctrines may indeed still stand for a time; but the entire theological edifice is undermined and hollowed out if it is no longer borne by the inspired, infallible word of Scripture. . . . If theology gives up the inspiration of Scripture, if the Bible is no longer the infallible Word of God but a human, fallible record of the things of which it treats, the *loci classici* and *dicta probantia* are no longer of any avail. A veritable deluge of all manner of skeptical questions concerning the origin and content of Scripture is unloosed which cannot be checked and controlled." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1902, p. 130.) Dr. B. B. Warfield writes—and let the reader weigh his words and judge whether he is using extreme language—: "But, we may be reminded, the Church has not held with such tenacity to all doctrines taught in the Bible. How are we to account, then, for the singular constancy of its confession of the Bible's doctrine of inspiration? The account to be given is again simple and capable of being expressed in a single sentence. It is due to an instinctive feeling in the Church that the trustworthiness of the Scriptures lies at the foundation of trust

in the Christian system of doctrine and is therefore fundamental to the Christian hope and life. The validity of the Christian's hope in the several promises of the Gospel rests on the trustworthiness of the Bible. . . . Such a Word of God, Christ and His apostles offer us when they give us the Scriptures, not as man's report to us of what God says, but as the very Word of God itself, spoken by God Himself through human lips and pens. Of such a precious possession, given to her by such hands, the Church will not lightly permit herself to be deprived. Thus the Church's sense of her need of an absolutely infallible Bible has cooperated with her reverence for the teaching of the Bible to keep her true, in all ages, to the Bible doctrine of plenary inspiration." (*Revelation and Inspiration*, pp. 61, 71.) And now hear Dr. Walther once more — is he using extreme language? "Dr. Luther writes in his *Large Confession Concerning the Lord's Supper* with reference to Zwingli's *alloeosis*: 'Beware, beware, I say of the *alloeosis*! For it is a devil's mask; for at last it manufactures such a Christ after whom I certainly would not be a Christian; namely, that henceforth Christ should be no more and do no more with His sufferings and life than any other mere saint. For if I believe this, that only the human nature has suffered for me, then Christ is to me a poor Savior; then He Himself indeed needs a Savior. In a word, it is unspeakable what the devil seeks by the *alloeosis*.' (Quoted in the Formula of Concord, VIII, par. 40.) We must apply this to the so-called '*Gottmenschlichkeit der Schrift*'" (the divine-human nature of Scripture) "as the term is used by the modern-conservative theology: Beware, beware, I say, of this 'divine-human Scripture'! It is a devil's mask; for at last it manufactures such a Bible after which I certainly would not care to be a Bible Christian, namely, that the Bible should henceforth be no more than any other good book, a book which I would have to read with constant sharp discrimination in order not to be led into error. For if I believe this, that the Bible contains also errors, it is to me no longer a touchstone but itself stands in need of one. In a word, it is unspeakable what the devil seeks by this 'divine-human Scripture.' . . . *Erbarme sich Gott seiner*

*armen Christenheit in dieser letzten, betruebten und gefaehrlichen Zeit!"* (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1886, p. 76.)

And this Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is the sole source and norm of Christian doctrine. Dr. Walther and those of a like mind were raised up by God to keep the Church on the *sola Scriptura*. Dr. Walther reaffirmed, and insisted on, the sole authority of Scripture. He ruled out the appeal to any other authority. At the dedication of Concordia Seminary, in 1883, he said: "In this house the subject of our incessant study shall not be the word and wisdom of man but the Word of God, nothing but the Word of God, and the whole Word of God." (See entire address in Hochstetter's *Die Geschichte der Missourisynode*, p. 447 ff.) All human authority, the authority even of the revered Church Fathers, is ruled out. Read the essay Walther read at the meeting of the Synodical Conference in 1884: "*Wie verwerflich es sei, Sachen des Glaubens aus den Schriften der Vaeter begruenden und die Gewissen an die Lehrentscheidungen derselben binden zu wollen.*"

Did Walther really rule out the authority of the Church Fathers? Was he not a "repristinating" theologian? When the theological method of Walther and Hoenecke and Krauth and others is stigmatized as "the theology of repristination," the implication is that these men, leaning so heavily on the Fathers, gave them a place of authority beside Scripture. Now, Walther did lean heavily on the Fathers. He never disguised his disposition to do that. It did not go against his grain to write articles and books made up chiefly of quotations from the Fathers, from the Confessions, Luther, the dogmaticians. You could not insult him by calling him a "*Zitatentheolog.*" He would say: Yes; read, for instance, my article "*Was soll ein Christ tun,*" etc. (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1880, p. 257 ff.), — mostly quotations; and read my book *Kirche und Amt*, — mostly quotations. He said in the presidential address at the synodical convention of 1869: "A pupil, and I hope to God, a faithful pupil, of Luther, I have, in all that I have publicly spoken and written in the past, simply repeated in a stammering way the words of this last prophet." (*Proceedings*, p. 22.)

But the charge that Walther, leaning so heavily on the Fathers, did not stand solely on the Scriptures is a false charge. At the corner-stone laying of Concordia Seminary, in 1882, he declared: "In this new Concordia the instructors and students will indeed humbly sit at the feet of those blessed teachers of the Church who have mined priceless treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge from the rich vein of Holy Scripture . . . ; but deeply will the great word of the Lord be impressed on our eager youth: 'One is your Master, even Christ.'" (Hochstetter, *op. cit.*, p. 439.) Read *Kirche und Amt* and see whether Holy Scripture or the writings of the Fathers are adduced as proof. Read the essay mentioned above: On the crime of establishing doctrines by the writings of the Fathers and binding the conscience to their doctrinal decisions. Do not men know that Walther refused to follow the dogmaticians when they erred? Says Dr. Pieper: "Thus Walther, too, in spite of his many quotations from the old theologians, in his heart and conscience took his stand on the Word unmodified by interpretation. He insisted that never an exegesis but always the *naked* text, without exegesis, must be the determinative factor in the heart and conscience of the theologian. Such was Walther, the 'theologian of repristination,' the '*Zitatentheolog* [quotation-monger].'" (*Conversion and Election*, p. 96 f. Cp. F. Pieper, *Lectures on Die Ev.-Luth. Kirche die wahre sichtbare Kirche*, p. 163.)

It is true indeed that Walther made copious use of the writings of the Fathers. And we thank God for that. That helped to make him the great theologian he was. One who lightly casts aside the wisdom of the Fathers, relying altogether on his own wisdom, will never amount to much in the Church. Does he expect God to perform a miracle in his case? Or does he think that he himself can perform the miracle of attaining a full understanding of Christian theology without taking advantage of the learning of the orthodox teachers of old? As things have been ordered by God, it becomes our sacred duty to utilize faithfully what God has set before us by the hands of the Fathers, seeing, too, that at bottom they were dealing with the very same problems that are confronting us. God's

blessing cannot rest upon the young theologian who casts away the heritage the Fathers acquired for him. "Let no man," says Walther, "despise the gifts which God bestowed during these 1800 years upon our godly teachers, the treasures stored up for us by God's great goodness in their books. He that does so disobeys God, God's explicit command laid down in Scripture. Such a man will not grow in knowledge but becomes increasingly blind." (*Proceedings, Syn. Conf.*, 1884, p. 11.) Walther accounts it a blessing that . . . "we are driven to study the more eagerly the words of our old teachers, to explore the treasures which our Church has won and stored up for us, and, since we can add but little or nothing to these treasures, to guard and preserve them the more faithfully. . . . May this treatise serve to make men realize what treasures of wisdom and knowledge lie buried in the dust-covered tomes of our God-enlightened Fathers! These treasures must no longer remain buried but must be dug up and used. That would be a gain of inestimable value for our Church." (*Die Stimme unserer Kirche*, etc., Foreword.) And so we shall go on repristinating the theology of the Fathers, of Luther, of the orthodox dogmaticians, and now, too, that of Walther. That will not take us away from the *sola Scriptura*. For it so happens, by the grace of God, that their theology was the theology of the Word.

Scripture is the sole source of doctrine; consequently there must be no development of doctrine in Christian theology. Science is progressive, and when God raises up great men in this field, new truths are discovered. But no new truths are being discovered in theology. God raises up great men in this field in order to restore to the Church, or to maintain, the old truths revealed in Scripture once for all. Walther says: "It is not true that the Church accumulates, from century to century, an ever-increasing store of divine doctrines. It is true that, since at all times men arise in her midst who 'speak perverse things to draw away disciples after them,' Acts 20:30, she is compelled to *formulate* the pure doctrine ever more precisely in order to unmask the deceiving spirits and keep them from smuggling, by means of deceptive phrases, false doctrines into the Church. However, that does not increase the number



of dogmas but only preserves them against perversion." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1868, p. 137.)

The "progressive" Lutherans do not approve of such an attitude. They call Walther and the men of like mind reactionaries, "repristinating" theologians, who deal in "canned theology."<sup>2)</sup> The Church needs men, they say, who are ready to utilize the developments in science for the developing of the Christian doctrine and are able to make their theology palatable to the modern mind. No "canned theology"! Well, Walther stuck to the old theology. He did not aim to enrich the Church with new doctrines. The Church does not need new doctrines, nor does she need to have the old doctrine adjusted to new views, which would make it a new doctrine. "There is truth, the modern attitude says, for this generation and truth for that generation. There is truth for this race and truth for that race but no truth for all races. Every generation has its own thought forms and cannot by any means use the thought forms of any other generation. . . . Frankly, I do not believe in the separate existence of an Oriental mind or an Occidental mind or a medieval mind or a modern mind. . . . I think we may safely resist the skepticism which holds that the convictions of one generation can never by any chance be the convictions of another." (Dr. J. G. Machen, *The Christian Faith in the Modern World*, pp. 90-95.) What men in the days of the apostles needed and what saved them is the very thing we moderns need, the very same doctrine, the very same thought forms. The modern mind is able to form certain new thoughts, plenty of them; but it cannot produce a new thought which is fit to take the place, for instance, of the old thought expressed in the old thought form: justification without works, by faith alone. The most modern mind *must* adjust itself to this old formula. And so, said Dr. Walther, addressing the convention of 1866, we were sure that "the teaching of the sixteenth century would also in our nineteenth century edify the souls unto salvation; that the tree of our old Lutheran Church which for centuries bore such blessed fruit for the salvation of millions would today blossom and burst forth

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2) See *Conc. Theol. Monthly*, 1936, p. 223.

in fruit with the same fecundity as of yore, — and, behold, our hope has not been confounded.” (*Brosamen*, p. 540.) We thank God that Walther did not attempt to adjust, modify, make over, change, the old doctrine. Do you know what happens when the modern theologians, in their youthful itch to go beyond the Fathers, set about developing the Christian doctrine? Read the series of articles by Walther in volumes 21–23 of *Lehre und Wehre*: “*Was ist es um den Fortschritt der modernen lutherischen Theologie in der Lehre?*” What these men called development of doctrine resulted in the abridgment or total loss of it.

The Christian theologian is determined to teach *nothing but* what is written, and he is equally determined that *all that is thus written* must be accepted. He recognizes no “open questions” in the sense that, though certain doctrines are clearly revealed in Scripture, the Church is at liberty to accept or reject them. Read the series of articles Walther published in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1868, p. 100 f.: “*Die falschen Stuetzen der modernen Theologie von den offenen Fragen.*” No, all that is written must be accepted.

And it must be accepted on the bare word of Scripture. Dr. Walther insisted that, when Scripture had spoken, the matter was no longer debatable. Dealing with the doctrine of inspiration, he asked, What does Scripture say on this point? And adducing the pertinent proof-texts, he said: “‘It is written’ — *damit ist die Sache abgemacht.*” (*Lutherstunde*, Feb. 12, 1886.) And dealing with any other doctrine, he would quote you the pertinent statement of Scripture, quote it again and again if you were hard of hearing, and conclude: “‘It is written’ — *damit ist die Sache abgemacht.*” Will you raise any objection to what the inspired Word of your God says?

All that is written must be accepted and maintained; not one jot or tittle of it can be yielded. Not one tittle of the doctrine of inspiration did Walther yield; he would not admit even the *possibility* of any error in any part, even the relatively most insignificant part, of the Bible. And he would not yield any doctrine or any part of any doctrine drawn from the inspired infallible Word of God. “Our Church has taken for the foundation on which she stands the Holy Scriptures, and on it she stands honestly

and squarely; from this foundation she will not depart one finger's breadth (*'vel transversum, ut aiunt, unguem'*); that is her character, that is her charge, that makes her a blessing to all Christendom, that is her crown, of which she will not and cannot let herself be robbed." (*Lehre und Wehre*, Foreword, 1871, p. 11.)

The article in which this statement occurs is an arraignment of unionism. Indifference to the doctrines taught in Scripture is a characteristic of unionism, the spirit of compromise between truth and error its breath of life. Therefore unionism and loyalty to God's Word cannot stand together, and Walther, the loyal liege of Scripture, spurned the advances of unionists. Thesis XXI, C, of *Die Ev.-Luth. Kirche die wahre sichtbare Kirche*: "The Ev. Lutheran Church rejects all fraternal and churchly fellowship with those who reject its Confessions in whole or in part." Compare Thesis VIII, B, first part of *Kirche und Amt*, and Thesis XXXII, *Die rechte Gestalt*.

"The Scriptures cannot be broken," said the Christian mind and heart of Walther when pressure was brought to bear upon him to yield a word or a letter of Scripture. The great majority of the theologians might oppose him. They might quote Father after Father against him. They might ridicule his teaching as conflicting with reason. His own flesh and blood might implore him to yield up parts of his teaching for the sake of harmony in the Church or in the interest of harmonizing the doctrines of Scripture. All that did not move him. He would write an article of this sort: "*Was soll ein Christ tun, wenn er findet, dass zwei Lehren, die sich zu widersprechen scheinen, beiderseits klar und deutlich in der Schrift gelehrt werden?*" (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1880, p. 257 ff.) and define his position thus: "Luther therefore writes: 'If harmonizing were in order, we could not retain a single article of the faith'; and the Formula of Concord declares with reference to the doctrine of the election of grace: 'Our curiosity has always much more pleasure in concerning itself with these matters than with what God has revealed to us concerning this in His Word, because we cannot harmonize it, which, moreover, we have not been commanded to do.' (XI, par. 53.)" Walther would not yield one tittle of Scripture.

He stood like a rock. For he stood on a rock. And he became as a rock. "It is written," he said, and nothing could move him.

Dr. Walther's insistence on the *sola Scriptura* accounts for his great influence. He was endowed with great gifts. He was a man of eminent learning, learned in the Scriptures. He was a teacher, knowing how to impart knowledge to others. He was of a determined character, utterly unable to go against his convictions. But these great gifts served their purpose only because they were put in the service of Scripture itself. Walther had learned that greatest of all theological arts — to let Scripture speak for itself. He never asked men to accept any teaching except on the authority of Scripture. He did not presume on his own authority and standing.<sup>3)</sup> He did not resort to philosophical argumentation. He let Scripture speak for itself, insisting of course, as Scripture insists, that every word of it, as the inspired Word of God, must be accepted. What could men do in such a case? They might be inclined to dispute the word of Dr. Walther, and they had a perfect right to do so; but what could men, Christian men, do when Walther confronted them with the written Word of their God? That carries an irresistible appeal to the Christians. They are not interested in hearing learned men tell of their thoughts about God and His ways. But let a man call their attention to God's thoughts and God's words, and their hearts are won. And so Dr. Walther wielded a blessed influence on thousands and hundreds of thousands throughout the world. That is to say, the Word of God, voiced by Walther and his comrades, spread and grew, and a great host gave willing allegiance to it as the inspired Word of God.<sup>4)</sup>

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3) See M. Guenther, *Dr. C. F. W. Walther*, p. 170, for the story of the incident that caused Walther to declare: "Er sei ein Mensch wie der Geringste in der Versammlung, und dieser Geringste sei so viel hoeher denn er, so er Gottes Wort gegen ihn fuehre, als Gott hoeher sei denn ein Mensch."

4) W. Rohnert says: "In our days the American Missouri Synod (Prof. Walther, † 1887) has been the most outspoken and consistent champion of the old doctrine of the verbal inspiration." (*Dogmatik*, p. 105.) Dr. Bente quotes a German period-

And this influence is still a mighty power in the land. God has been very good to us. He has kept us, by means of it, in glad allegiance to the Scriptures. Portions of the Lutheran Church have passed through a sad experience during the past fifty years. At the installation of three professors at the Gettysburg Seminary one of the speakers said: "When I came to the seminary years ago, I fully believed in the verbal inspiration of every book in the Bible. . . . I do not say that our professors held or taught a verbal-dictation theory of inspiration, but I fancy I had plenty of company in my jejune conception and belief that the Bible in all its statements was inerrant." And he added: "What a change has been wrought in the sphere of New Testament scholarship during the last fifty years!" (See *Theol. Monthly*, 1927, p. 172.) And since 1927 the denial of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture has become still more general and vehement in these circles. (See *Conc. Theol. Monthly*, 1935, p. 825 f.; 1936, p. 300 ff.; 1937, p. 542 ff.; 867 ff.; 1938, p. 296 ff.) When we came to the Seminary fifty years ago, the Bible was to us an infallible authority in all its statements, and our professors made us see still more clearly the sacred majesty of its inviolable authority as the inspired Word of God. And as you leave the Seminary today, your hearts, I trust, are filled with the same awe, and you are determined to preach nothing but what is written, to yield not one word or letter of what is thus written. God has been very good to His

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ical: "Missouri alone of all church-bodies still maintains the inerrancy of Scripture and thus forms the last strong bulwark against Biblical criticism which is undermining the Christian faith all along the line"; but he adds: "The synods of Iowa, Ohio, Buffalo, and others have always, like Missouri, openly declared for the absolute inerrability of the entire Holy Scriptures. Yea, we are glad to note that the Lutherans have in this battle many comrades even in the Reformed bodies of our country, particularly in the ranks of the so-called Fundamentalists." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1923, p. 363.) Just how much did those men within and without the Lutheran Church who stood for the inspiration and sole authority of Scripture owe to Walther? And just to what degree was Walther helped and heartened by their testimony? These are futile questions. But there is a pretty general agreement that within the Lutheran Church Dr. Walther was the leader in the holy war.

Church in keeping us under the influence of His servant Walther.<sup>5)</sup>

Will this situation continue? Dr. Walther spoke these earnest words in a *Lutherstunde*, and he is saying it today: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken.' That is and must remain our battle-cry. That is the device emblazoned on our banner. If ever our Synod should no longer hold this banner aloft, her fall would not be imminent, but would already have set in, and she would be fit only to be cast away as insipid salt that no longer serves but only deserves to be trodden under foot." (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 1911, p. 158.) Let us take heed! Let us guard our heritage! The foe that Dr. Walther met fifty years ago has increased his strength. He has enlisted many more Lutherans than before in his ranks. His assaults are growing more determined. You are summoned and privileged to take up arms in a holy war, and taking up the battle-cry *Ἐγὼ πάλαι*, as Walther sounded it, as Luther sounded it against Rome and rationalism, as Jesus Christ sounded it against Satan: "It is written," you will be fit leaders of the Church in her fight for her dearest treasures.<sup>6)</sup>

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5) The *Lutheran Observer*, 1915: "The principles of pure Lutheranism were from the first insisted upon by Walther and his *confrères*, and to this day the Missouri Synod stands for the most conservative type of Lutheranism to be found in the United States." (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 1915, p. 132.) *The Lutheran Church in American History* by A. R. Wentz (second edition, 1932): "Such were the beginnings and the characteristics of the great body of Lutheran immigrants in the nineteenth century. . . . These new Lutherans came without pomp or circumstance and took their places quietly in the land. . . . Their unflinching loyalty to the Lutheran Confessions made them impervious to the religious whims that blew over most of the other churches from time to time. . . . This strong infusion of confessional elements into the body of the Lutheran Church in America not only stimulated the confessional reaction in the older organizations of American Lutherans, but it also stamped the Lutheran Church as a whole in the eyes of all other churches in this country as indelibly evangelical and forever doctrinally conservative." (P. 193 f.)

6) "How gloriously would the American Lutheran Church fulfil its mission here in America, standing like an unshaken rock in the midst of the billows of sectarianism, if it took its

Walther faithfully guarded this treasure of the Church: the inspired Word of God. Just as faithfully he guarded the other great treasure of the Church: the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ. And he guarded the first in the interest of the second. The one thing which he stressed above all things, which directed all his theological work, and for the sake of which he fought so staunchly and persistently for the *sola Scriptura*, was the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ. He fought for the verbal inspiration not merely in order to fulfil a duty laid upon the Christian theologian by Scripture. No; Scripture was so sacred to him because it bears the Gospel of salvation. Scripture took him captive by this, that the Gospel of grace took him captive. Dr. Walther was a Gospel theologian. His chief interest lay in bringing the Gospel of grace to the sinner and in training men for this one great work of the Christian Church.

Dr. Walther was a Christian theologian. The theology of the Christian Church is the theology of grace. The Christian people live on the Gospel of grace. People who base their hope of salvation on their own work and worth "are not Christians but are and remain work-saints, whatever other name they may bear, Jews, Mohammedans, papists." (Luther, IX, 25.) The ministry which the Christian theologian has received of the Lord Jesus consists in testifying the Gospel of the grace of God, Acts 20:24. And that was the ministry of Dr. Walther: faithfully and powerfully he testified the Gospel of the grace of God.

He preached the Gospel of grace in its fulness. He presented to the sinful world and the Christian people all the elements of saving grace—saving grace in that it is for all, saving grace in that it does all. He presented the doctrine of *universal grace* in its full import. "We know that God really and truly would have all men to be saved. He has revealed that to us in His Word. And we can

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stand as one man on the clear Word and bore witness to the clear Word! There Luther's strength lay. There must remain the strength of Lutheranism over against all sectarian formations until Judgment Day." (F. Pieper, *Conversion and Election*, p. 103.)

never sufficiently praise God for this, that He is such a tender Father that He would have mercy even on the most depraved of men." (*Proc., West. Dist.*, 1874, p. 31.) For this he loved the Gospel: "Since all men are reconciled to God and the Gospel is the message thereof, it is such an ineffable grace to come within the sound of the Gospel" (see *Lehre und Wehre*, 1890, p. 46), and he denounced the denial of it as a crime against God and humanity. (Cp. *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*, p. 126.) It robs God of His honor and deprives the sinner of the needed comfort. "Serious misgivings so often oppress the heart. It deeply feels the wrath of God. It asks, Does God's love extend to me, too? Am I, too, miserable creature that I am, redeemed? In such afflictions we must show that these thoughts dishonor God, who is the eternal Love. . . . Satan's chief object is to keep us from trusting in the love of God and thus becoming divinely assured of our salvation. So we see of what inestimable importance and how precious and salutary the doctrine of the universality of God's grace is." (*Proc., West. Dist.*, 1874, p. 38.) Faithfully Walther guarded this priceless treasure. He warded off the Calvinistic speculations on the "sovereignty" of God. He did not yield to the argument of carnal reason that, if it is due to God's gracious will alone that I am saved, it must also be due to God's will that another is not saved. Walther took his stand on *Scripture* and thus was enabled to acquit himself as a Christian theologian, a faithful witness of the grace of God, to proclaim the glorious message: "'The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to *all men*.' Oh, the height and depth, the breadth and length, of it! Oh, the inexhaustible riches of grace! Rejoice, O my soul; not one of all that belong to the human race, not one, is excluded; for the saving grace of God hath appeared 'to all men'; it brings salvation to all, to all of them; God would save all, all of them, despite their sin and unworthiness, freely and without cost, as grace is wont to deal. . . . As the vault of heaven encloses the whole terrestrial ball, every portion and point of it, so the heaven of God's grace encloses the whole world of sinners that inhabits this earth. A man can so harden himself that *he*



does not care for grace; but he cannot sin so grievously that grace does not care for him." (*Brosamen*, p. 24 f.)

Just as clearly and forcefully Walther proclaimed the *sola gratia*. We owe our salvation to grace alone. First, we obtain the forgiveness of sins as a free gift. God does not offer to justify the sinner on condition that he do something to make himself worthy of the forgiveness of sins. God is not waiting for us to reconcile Him to us. Christ has fully taken care of that. God is reconciled, the sins of the world are already forgiven, a free pardon is offered to all. "The Lutheran Church tells the sinner, as the Word of God tells him: *Es ist schon alles getan*; you are already redeemed, you are already justified before God; you need not therefore do anything to redeem yourself, to reconcile God to you, to earn your salvation. All that has already been accomplished. Only believe! Believe that Christ, the Son of God, has already gained all this for you; through this faith you obtain all this and are saved." (*Proc., West. Dist.*, 1874, p. 43.) Forgiveness of sins as a free gift, gained by Christ on the cross once for all (objective justification) and accepted by the sinner by faith (subjective justification) — that is the Gospel in which Walther gloried; for that is the only message that can bring joy to the sinner's heart. "Since all men are reconciled to God and the Gospel is the message thereof, it is such an ineffable grace to come within the sound of the Gospel." "Righteousness lies ready; it must not first be achieved by man. If man were to attempt to do so, that would be an awful crime, a fighting against grace and against the reconciliation and perfect redemption accomplished by the Son of God, . . . Having this doctrine, what exceedingly happy and blessed people we Lutherans are! This teaching takes us to Christ by a straight route. It opens heaven to us when we feel hell in our hearts. . . . We can approach Christ directly and say: 'Lord Jesus, I am a poor sinner; I know it; that has been my experience in the past, and when I reflect what is going on in my heart now, I must say, that is still my experience. But Thou hast called me by Thy Gospel. I come to Thee just as I am; for I could come no other way.' That is the saving doctrine which the Evangelical Lutheran Church has learned from Christ and the apostle." (*The Proper Distinction*, etc., p. 136 f.)

We owe our salvation entirely to God's grace; for, in the second place, this faith by which we accept the forgiveness of sins as a free gift is itself God's work, God's gift. Grace carries through the work of salvation; at no stage is the sinner called upon to contribute something of his own. Conversion is solely and exclusively the work of God. "God the Holy Spirit effects the sinner's conversion because of grace, for Christ's sake; man can hinder his conversion but cannot cooperate towards it." (*Proc., North. Dist.*, 1873, p. 43.) And what moved God to create faith in my heart? Was there anything in me to attract God's favorable attention? Did He see some spiritual change and improvement in me on the basis of which He could successfully carry on His work or for the sake of which He would bother with me? No, says Walther; He converted me "because of His grace, for Christ's sake." "Who among us if he is a true Christian will not declare: I would never have sought the dear Lord if He had not sought me; I would never have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ if the Holy Ghost had not granted me this great gift of faith; I have not earned it through my conduct, through my prayers, through my struggling and striving? . . . Every one who is really converted will speak thus, and one who thinks he has acquitted himself so well in this matter, he has been so willing, he has helped along, and his many labors, many tears, many prayers, counted for something, is a miserable hypocrite, who is blinded by the devil. Man can do nothing, nothing; God must do all." (*Proc., West. Dist.*, 1876, p. 65.) "*Wir wollen dem Menschen keinen Anteil geben an seiner Seligmachung. . . . Das ist unser Interesse.*" (*Proc., Sec. Gen. Pastoral Conf.*, Fort Wayne, 1881, p. 21.) For to have man cooperate towards his conversion or produce the necessary conditions for his conversion would be demanding the impossible of him—he is spiritually dead—and would cast him into despair, or it would make of him a self-satisfied Pharisee.

Tenaciously Walther clung to the article that man can do nothing, that God does all in converting, saving, the sinner. He, too, was tempted by his flesh to embrace the Pelagian creed, that man can effect his own conversion, or the Semi-Pelagian creed, that man can claim half the

credit, or the synergistic creed, that man can at least help the work along. He trampled the satanic delusion under foot. Nor would he yield to the arguments of his *rationalistic* flesh. The synergists told him — and his synergistic reason told him — that, if salvation depends entirely on God, God must also be made responsible for the perdition of men; that, since God's grace is universal, the reason why some are saved and not others must lie in man, the reason being that the saved happen to be of better stuff than the others; that, therefore, in order to save the *gratia universalis*, the *sola gratia* must be qualified, restricted, reduced; if you do not so qualify it, if you exclude man's part in his conversion, you lay yourself open to the charge of Calvinism. Walther trampled the temptation under foot. He was a Bible theologian and said: "Our reason will at once raise the objection: "If God does all, if He must take away our resistance; if the cause of man's non-resisting, of his conversion, does not lie at all in him, God must be the cause why so many are not converted. Thus reason argues; and, in truth, we have here an absolutely incomprehensible mystery. But let it be ever so incomprehensible, ever so contradictory, that does not bother us Lutherans." (*Proc., West. Dist.*, 1876, p. 63.) It does seem that you cannot retain *universal* grace if you maintain *sole* grace. But what does a Christian do in such a case? You have read Walther's article in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1880, p. 257 ff.: "*Was soll ein Christ tun, wenn er findet, dass zwei Lehren, die sich zu widersprechen scheinen, beiderseits klar und deutlich in der Schrift gelehrt werden?*" Walther had learned the great art of the Christian theologian to set Scripture above reason, and so he had learned the greatest of all arts: to comfort men with the *gratia universalis* and to glory in the *sola gratia*. And how he gloried in it to the glory of God! "When we enter heaven, we shall have no reason to take credit unto ourselves. We shall not say: Well, I am now in glory, but I certainly did all that was in my power to achieve that! No, this cursed self-praise will never be heard in heaven. All the elect and all angels of heaven know nothing but to praise God's grace. It is all, altogether, grace — that, dear brethren, must be the guiding star of our present

discussion. We must shudder at the possibility of tolerating any teaching here which robs God of the glory that it is all, all, pure grace and nothing else. I do not hope to be saved because I imagine that I am better by a hair's breadth than the vilest sinner but because God has revealed in His Word that it was the good pleasure of His will to make of me, a poor, lost sinner, an everlasting monument of his eternal grace." (*Proc., West. Dist., 1877, p. 26.*)<sup>7)</sup>

Walther, the faithful witness of the Gospel of grace, gave himself up to it entirely. The article of saving grace reigned in his heart. First, *it ruled and shaped his theology*. He understood and stressed its supreme importance. The only hope of the sinner lies in the article of the grace of God in Christ. Deny this article or violate it in any way, and you are destroying the comfort of the Christian. You are tearing the heart out of Christianity. Any violation of the *sola gratia*, the teaching, for instance, that man's salvation depends on his self-determination, "subverts the whole Christian religion, denies Christ as the sole Foundation of our salvation and the only Savior of mankind, thus repudiates the Gospel, disavows the power of the blood and death of Christ and His redemption, takes from God the glory that He alone saves us, and gives this glory partly to man; yea, since salvation and the mercy of God are made to depend 'at bottom and so solely and entirely' on the conduct of man, on his free personal self-determination, it is given to man *entirely*." (*Lehre und Wehre, 1872, p. 322.*)

Furthermore, the importance of the article of saving grace lies in its relation to all the other doctrines of Scripture. It gives them their importance. They would

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7) "Two controlling principles determined Dr. Walther's position. He desired to give God all the glory for man's present and final salvation. At the same time he refused to ask or answer all the questions which human reason raises in its effort to bridge the gaps of its own ignorance. The first principle was opposed to *synergism*, or the doctrine that an unconverted man can in any way contribute to his own salvation. The second principle was opposed to *Calvinism*, which has attempted to make a consistent rational scheme out of the Scripture data on predestination." (W. H. Cooper, in the *Lutheran*, Oct. 6, 1937.)

be meaningless without the article of salvation by grace. When, therefore, this article is denied or vitiated, all other articles must be given a new, an unscriptural, meaning. And where this article is honestly held, it will ultimately rectify the error that has crept in elsewhere. "For the devil at all times assaults the grace of God; no heresy can bear the teaching of divine grace." (Luther, III, p. 163.) . . . Every heresy that has sprung up was caused by the heretics' inability to believe that man becomes righteous in the sight of God and is saved by grace alone. That is the real rock of offense against which all heresies, all false teachers, dash their head." (*The Proper Distinction*, etc., pp. 160, 163.) "On the other hand," says Luther (VIII, 628), as quoted by Walther, "this power inheres in this article, that, if you give yourself to it wholeheartedly and earnestly, it will not let you stray into heresy and fight against Christ and Christendom." (*Die luth. Lehre v. d. Rechtf.*, p. 11.) "This made Luther the invincible Reformer. If he had not stood on this rock, a man like Erasmus could have thrown him easily. . . . As often as new deceiving spirits confronted him, he tested them with this article; and if they did not agree with it, he said: Depart—to him who sent you." (*Proc., Syn. Conf.*, 1872, p. 27.) Walther understood the interrelation of the articles of the Christian religion. He put the doctrine of saving grace in the center.

There is the article of justification by faith, the chief article of the Christian religion, and at the center of this article lies the *sola gratia*—"being justified freely by His grace." Since the grace of God culminates in the justification of the sinner, the greatest blessing and the source of all blessings, the article of justification is the chief article, the heart of the Christian religion; but since justification is by grace alone, you can say just as well that salvation by grace is the chief article, the heart of the Christian religion. Says Walther: "The Ev. Lutheran Church gives to each teaching of Scripture the place and importance it has in God's Word itself. It makes the teaching concerning Christ, or justification, the foundation and marrow and guiding star of all teaching." (*Die Ev.-Luth. Kirche die wahre sichtbare Kirche*, Thesis XVIII.)

There is the article of the distinction between the Law and the Gospel. That is nothing else than the article of salvation by grace alone, applied to the need of the terrified sinner. Walther indicates the close relation of these two doctrines when he points out that the Lutheran Church, understanding the relative importance of the various Bible doctrines, places first (A.) the doctrine of Christ, or of justification, but then urges at once the supreme necessity of distinguishing between the Law and the Gospel. "B. The Ev. Lutheran Church distinguishes sharply between the Law and the Gospel." (*Die Ev.-Luth. Kirche*, etc., Thesis XVIII.) "This distinction between Law and Gospel is the highest art in Christianity," says Luther (IX:798), and the highest art of the theologian. Walther was a master of it. Read his wonderful book *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*. Studying it, you will learn the highest art of the Christian, learn to say with Luther, with Walther: "According to the *Law*, which charges me with guilt, I am indeed a lost, condemned sinner; but *I appeal from the Law to the Gospel*; for God has given, besides the Law, another word, that is, the Gospel, which gives us this grace, the forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness and life, frees me from my terror and damnation, and assures me that all guilt is paid by the Son of God, Jesus Christ Himself." (*Die Ev.-Luth. Kirche*, etc., p. 113.) And studying it, you will ask the Holy Ghost to teach you this highest art. It is not the Christian's achievement, but God's gracious gift. Says Luther, says Walther: "Without the Holy Ghost it is impossible to grasp and make this distinction." (L. c.)

What place do the means of grace occupy in the divine scheme of salvation? They derive their importance from their relation to the article of saving grace: they are the means which bring to us the grace gained by Christ, confer upon us the forgiveness of sins. And it is of vital importance that the sinner make such use of them. "They contain the grace which was in God's heart from eternity towards us poor sinners, which Christ gained for us; they are the hands by which God bestows it upon us, so that He is all in all and we have nothing to glory in." (*Proc., West. Dist.*, 1876, p. 21.) "It is a useless tale when I am

told about a precious treasure which I am to fetch if the way to the treasure is not shown me and the means for lifting it. . . . Whoever does not go to these places [Word, Baptism, Lord's Supper] to lift it will not fetch any gold." (*The Proper Distinction*, etc., p. 163.)

What is faith, and why does faith justify, faith alone? Unless you teach that grace alone saves, you will harbor and spread Jewish and Gentile opinions concerning faith. Why can faith save? "When Christ says: 'He that believeth . . . shall be saved,' He is telling us: You have fallen away from God through sin, fallen into an eternal debt, which you cannot pay. But be comforted; I, the Son of God, have paid your debt and thereby regained for you the grace of God and eternal salvation, and I offer you all this as a free gift. Now, then, accept this gift, and all will be well. And it is just this acceptance which constitutes the faith of which the Christian religion speaks." (*Lutherstunde*. See *Lehre u. Wehre*, 1890, p. 183.)

And this faith by which the sinner obtains the treasures of God's grace is itself a gift of pure grace. Conversion is in no wise the achievement of man but altogether and in every respect God's work in us. Take the *sola gratia* out of the article of conversion, and you will be teaching nothing but Jewish, Gentile, opinions on conversion. Was Walther a Christian theologian? You have read above what he had to say on this matter. He was raised up by God to keep the *sola gratia* in the article of conversion. For that he lived and labored. That was the crowning glory of his work.

Walther preached powerfully on sanctification. Powerfully — because he knew, and led men to, the only source from which personal holiness and all spiritual life and power flow. "As soon as a man really comes under the grace of God in Christ, this grace takes him in hand and like a faithful mother nurturing her child trains and rears him in the hatred of all ungodliness and worldly lusts. . . . He is impelled to do for his neighbor what God did for him, lovingly, gently, humbly; and he finds the happiness of his life in this, that it is spent in the service of God. Finally the grace of God teaches and trains us to look for the glorious appearing of the Savior Jesus Christ.

When a man once knows what God's grace in Christ means, his whole nature and life are changed. Without grace a man clings to this life, the life on earth. Under grace he looks forward to the appearing of Christ, at death or at the Last Day, waiting for it with the eager expectancy of our children at the approach of Christmas Eve." (*Brosamen*, p. 26 f.) Where the grace of God is preached, "people will notice that wonderful things are happening among them. Alas! many ministers do not meet with these wonderful experiences: their hearers remain sleepy; their misers stay stingy. What is the reason? Not sufficient Gospel has been preached to them." (*The Proper Distinction*, etc., p. 406.)

The uncompromising stand which Walther took in the long controversy on the Church and the Ministry was due not only to his zeal for purity of doctrine in general but also and chiefly (and at bottom it amounts to the same thing) to his passion for keeping the article of saving grace inviolate. He points out, for instance: "He who restricts salvation to fellowship with any visible Church therewith overthrows the article of the justification of a poor sinner in the sight of God by faith alone." (*Kirche und Amt*, under Thesis IX, first part.) "Clearly the teaching that there is a visible Church outside of which there is no salvation and that the validity of absolution depends on the ordination of the administrant, etc., is in conflict with the truth that faith alone saves." (*Die lutherische Lehre v. d. Rechtf.*, p. 93.) The false teaching on Church and Ministry is not a small matter. When Walther and his brethren had fought their way through to a clear understanding of this doctrine, he declared: "There is no doubt in our mind that, if God in His infinite mercy had not come to our aid, making us to see the Romanizing features of our former doctrine and practise, we should not only have been working towards the destruction of Christianity, but we ourselves also should have been lost eternally." (*Lutheraner*, 1857, p. 2; cp. *Lutheraner*, 1845, p. 79.) Note also this angle: When the ministry sets itself above the common Christians, it makes light of the surpassing dignity and glory which saving grace, justifying grace, has conferred upon these common Christians. "The



minister administers his office and absolves 'in the name and behalf of the congregation.' Our moderns are horrified at hearing this. Administer our office in the name and by authority of peasants and tradespeople! . . . There are no people on earth more distinguished than the Christians; the angels serve them; above them is the open heaven; God has come down to them; they are clothed with the priestly robe of Christ's righteousness." (*Lehre u. Wehre*, 1876, p. 66.) The following, too, is worthy of note. Replying in 1843 to Grabau's *Hirtenbrief*, G. H. Loeber, Walther, and their associates stress this point among others: "Let us, dear colleague, devote our attention above all things to this, *thoroughly to search out and to preach in its fulness the pure Gospel of the free grace of God*, and let us trust God that *through this Word* He will mightily protect His Church in these last perilous times against all the gates of hell. If His Spirit and power were not with the Word, we ourselves could not accomplish anything, not even with our preaching of the pure Word, much less through the weight of our office or the scaffolding of order and ordinances." (See Hochstetter, *op. cit.*, p. 193.) Nothing, nothing, must take the place of, or interfere with, the preaching of saving grace.<sup>8)</sup>

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8) Walther's warning against slighting the Gospel was directed not only to those who placed the strength of the Church in the hierarchical "order." He condemned with the same vehemence every movement and tendency which would supplant the simple preaching of the Gospel with something more powerful. There are men who slur over the Gospel and stress "life and work," relying upon the activities of the Church, the legitimate and necessary activities, to put new life into the Church. Dr. Walther taught us that our first concern must be the study and the preaching of the Gospel of grace. That, and that alone, preserves and builds the Church. Nothing must interfere with, or take the place of, the Gospel. "Through the Word alone the mighty deeds which fill the history of the Church have been performed. Through the Word alone the Church will be preserved in these last evil days unto the end of the world." (*Brosamen*, p. 527.) Where the Gospel is preached abundantly, "people notice that wonderful things are happening among them." Preach "the pure Gospel of the free grace of God in its fulness. Through this Word God will protect His Church against all the gates of hell."

Need we ask how the doctrine of election is related to the article of saving grace? Its very name tells us that — *election of grace*. *Sola gratia* is the heart of the article of election. We owe our conversion to the grace of God alone, 2 Tim. 1:9, and this grace was bestowed upon us in eternity, in God's gracious election, 2 Tim. 1:9. When Walther treated the doctrine of the eternal election, all his thoughts revolved about this one thing, the *sola gratia*. He made the statement, quoted above: "*Wir wollen dem Menschen keinen Anteil geben an seiner Seligmachung. Das ist unser Interesse,*" while he was discussing the doctrine of election. Election was his theme when he uttered the words quoted above: "When we enter heaven, we shall have no reason to take credit unto ourselves. . . . It is all, altogether, grace." We owe our election to the *sola gratia*. . . . Thesis 10 of the Thirteen Theses: "We believe, teach, and confess that the cause which moved God to choose the elect is solely His grace and the merit of Jesus Christ and not any good thing which God has foreseen in the elect, even not the faith foreseen by God in them." And we owe our salvation to "His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Thesis 11: "We believe, teach, and confess that election is not the mere foresight or foreknowledge of the salvation of the elect but also a cause of their salvation and what pertains thereto."

The rule applies to every other doctrine: Unless you know its relation to the doctrine of saving grace, you will distort or misapply it. Take the doctrine of eternal damnation — "The Lord never makes mention of hell except for the purpose of bringing men to heaven." (*The Proper Distinction*, etc., p. 404.) In the Christian theology all articles converge toward, or radiate from, the grace of God in Christ. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" — that ruled and shaped Walther's theology.

Next, and necessarily so, it *ruled and shaped his policy*. As a Christian preacher he knew nothing but Christ Crucified and knew that he could achieve the purpose of his ministry — the salvation of souls — in no other way than by preaching the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ.

And his sole aim as a teacher of Christian theology was to enable and train men to pursue the same policy. At the dedication of Concordia Seminary in 1883 he said: "In this house young Christians shall be fitted to become heralds of the Gospel of Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world, who will confess with the holy twelve apostles: 'We are determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.'" (Hochstetter, *op. cit.*, p. 451.) Do you want to reach men's hearts, win them for Christ? "In accordance with God's will it should be the preacher's aim to *proclaim the Gospel to his hearers till their hearts are melted*, till they give up their resistance and confess that the Lord has been too strong for them, and henceforth they wish to abide with Jesus." (*The Proper Distinction*, etc., p. 406.) Is the Church in need of a reformation? Is her spiritual life at a low ebb? What, then, is the remedy? There is only one. All other remedies may galvanize the Church into temporary activity. But this is what puts life into the Church: The weakest graduate, if only he has grasped the doctrine that the grace of God in Christ Jesus has appeared to all men, to be received freely, by faith, can preach to men in such a way that they are assured of their salvation, and that is worth more than all the wisdom and all the possessions and treasures of the world. What is all erudition, as necessary as it is in its place, compared with the wisdom of God which is set forth when but the simple passage is expounded 'God so loved the world,' etc.? Hearing this, all poor sinners rejoice, all the holy angels are filled with wonder, and the whole world should sink upon its knees and sing 'Gloria' and 'Hallelujah.' If our young preachers preach this, they are the men who can start a reformation in our country, as indeed in this way a small beginning has already been made." (*Proc., Syn. Conf.*, 1872, p. 28.)

What the world needs, and what the Church needs, is the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ. And that means a preaching in which the gracious forgiveness of sins forms the burden of the message and is continually in the mind of the preacher. The Gospel-

preacher treats all the doctrines of the Bible fully, exhaustively, but he is always hastening towards his real subject, the gracious forgiveness of sins. He does not treat this article only occasionally, when he might feel that now its turn has come in the series of Christian teachings. No, it is always before him, he is always presenting it. He is obsessed with the fear that there might be too little Gospel in his preaching. He does not fear that people might say, as Luther puts it, "He is always harping on one string, he knows only one tune" (IV:1741). No, says Luther, "a preacher of the right sort puts this article above everything else and preaches it continuously, this article on which the true knowledge of God and our salvation hinges—this article that whoever has Christ has the Father and all grace, all divine blessings, and eternal life." (VIII:798.) Says Walther: "The Word of God is not rightly divided when the person teaching it does not allow the Gospel to have a general predominance in his teaching." (Last thesis in *The Proper Distinction*, etc., p.403.) That ministry is bound to be successful which makes the Gospel of grace the center of the preaching and of all church-work. There people "see wonderful things happening." And: "Your people will say: 'Our minister has given us what we could not get anywhere else. He is a true Lutheran minister and pours out a great treasure for us every Sunday.'" (Op. cit., p.408.) Any other kind of ministry, the substitution of any other kind of work for the preaching of the Gospel of grace, will not satisfy your people—nor yourselves; it gets no lasting results. "If you had to preach nothing else than sterile ethics, you might consider that a tedious task, yielding meager results. But if you have experienced in your heart what it means to convey to poor, lost, and condemned sinners the consolation of the Gospel and say to them: 'Do but come and believe,'—I say, if you believe this and ponder the full meaning of this, you cannot but look forward with joy to the day when you will stand for the first time before your congregations to deliver this august message." (Op. cit., p.137 f.)

✓ The article of saving grace was the one important thing to Walther. That shaped his policy throughout. It ruled

his congregational and synodical policy, and it was the controlling principle in his dealing with those who differed from him in doctrinal matters. Says Dr. Pieper: "Walther was disposed to recognize as orthodox not as few but as many persons as possible. He is stern in passing judgment on people whom he beholds sacrificing *sola gratia*. But people who hold fast this central doctrine gain his cordial good will, and he is confident that this truth which they hold will lead them to put away their error." (*Conversion and Election*, p. 83.)

Finally, the article of saving grace *shaped and ruled his life*. We heard him say above: "It is such an ineffable grace to come within the sound of the Gospel." To the grace of God, to the Gospel, he owed the greatest happiness that can come to a human being.<sup>9)</sup> To the unmerited grace of God he ascribed his understanding of the Gospel, of the article of saving grace, in its full import. (See *Lutheraner*, 1857, p. 2.) Whatever success he and our Synod had in the work of the Church "was solely and entirely the work of God's great, free grace." (*Brosamen*, p. 564 f.) And the grace of God that brought him salvation and assured him of his eternal salvation was the breath of his life and his stay in trial and tribulation. "All my hopes have come to naught; this one hope, however, sustains me, that our Father in heaven will soon deliver me from every evil of body and soul, property and honor, and finally, when my last hour has come, grant me miserable sinner for my Lord Jesus' sake a blessed end and graciously take me from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven. 'Eia, waer'n wir da! Eia, waer'n wir da!'" (From a letter to a friend. M. Guenther, *Dr. C. F. W. Walther*, p. 230.)

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9) You know the story as told in *Ebenezer*, p. 24. In his university days he had been led to base the assurance of his salvation on his contrition, his penitential struggles. But that brought him no assurance. "He says: 'Praying, sighing, weeping, fasting, struggling, was of no avail.' He was rescued from the doubts and uncertainty that had brought him to the verge of despair by a pastoral letter from Rev. M. Stephan, to whom he had written for advice. Stephan advised him to hasten to the saving arms of Jesus, and he would find healing under His wings. This Walther did, and the peace of God returned to his heart."

Walther, living on the Gospel of grace, lived and labored for it, and his labor was not in vain. The Gospel of the grace of God is the Church's one treasure, and the Christian people of this land and throughout the world owe him undying thanks for guarding it so faithfully. "It was due to him [Dr. Pieper] and Walther that the *sola gratia*, in which and on which the Lutheran Church has ever lived and which she always preached, has now come to be comprehended in the Lutheran Church of our country, also theoretically, in its full import and that thereby clear and clean theological thinking has been promoted." (Dr. M. Reu, in *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*. See *Lutheraner*, 1931, p. 262.) Dr. Pieper, Walther's foremost pupil, voices the thanks of the Church in these words: "We cannot but say: As the doctrine of the Church, which had been nearly forgotten also within the Lutheran Church, was again brought to light chiefly through Walther, so it is owing primarily to his testimony that the Biblical doctrine of conversion and election has not been entirely swept away by the torrent of the adverse teaching." (*Lehre u. Wehre*, 1890, p. 243.) While Pelagianism and synergism have spread far and wide in the modern churches, a great host is proclaiming with a loud and glad voice what all Christians are saying in their heart: "We owe our salvation solely to the grace of God."

The Church possesses two great treasures, the Gospel of saving grace and the inspired Word of God.<sup>10)</sup> Let us faithfully guard them! The Lutheran Church holds them in trust for the Church. Dr. C. E. Macartney (Presbyterian) wrote a few years ago: "The two great doctrines which Luther rediscovered and loosed upon the world were, first of all, the Scriptures as the final authority for the Christians and, secondly, justification by faith alone. . . . Today the Protestant Church stands in sore need of a reemphasis and rediscovery of these two great Refor-

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10) Which is the greater? They go together. The Church needs both of them. And we prize the one because of the value of the other. We love the Bible because it brings the Gospel of grace to us, the one thing needful. But we lose the assurance of the truth of the Gospel if the certainty of Scripture is gone.

mation propositions." (See *Luth. Witness*, 1934, p. 337.) A grave responsibility rests upon us who have come into the heritage of Dr. Walther. He *reemphasized* for our day the two great Reformation propositions and transmitted the treasures of the Church to our care with the solemn deprecation: "May the mouth of that teacher who shall at any time utter one word against Christ's free grace and against His alone true Word be smitten by God and stopped forever!" (Address at the corner-stone laying of Concordia Seminary, 1882. See Hochstetter, *op. cit.*, p. 445.) Let us acquit ourselves as faithful pupils of Dr. Walther. And "may God grant the whole Lutheran Church, in this land and throughout the world, the grace that she may stand before the world with her escutcheon unsullied and fulfil, for the good of the whole world, her God-appointed mission: to confess the *sola gratia* on the basis of the *sola Scriptura*!" (Dr. F. Pieper, in *Lehre u. Wehre*, 1927, p. 11.)

TH. E.

## Walther's Respect for the Congregation

The degrading Babylonian captivity of the Church at Avignon and the disgraceful schism made the long and loud cry for reform so persistent and insistent that at last a reform council met at Pisa in 1409. It deposed two rival Popes and elected another. Result? Three rival Popes; no reform!

Another reform council met at Constance from 1414 to 1418. It burned John Hus, Jerome of Prague, and the works of John Wiclif. Result? No reform!

A reform council met at Basel from 1443 to 1449, which the Pope called a "gang of Satan." They deposed the Pope for a heretic. The citizens had to stop the Holy Fathers from murdering each other. Result? No reform!

Pope Pius II had the German Nikolaus Krebs, Cardinal Cusa, draw up a plan of reform; but the corruption of the Church was so deep and so wide that the Pope was utterly helpless to reform.

In agreement with Kaiser Max and King Louis XII five cardinals called the reform council at Pisa in November, 1511. Result? No reform!

Julius II called a reform council at Rome on April 19, 1512, the Fifth Lateran. Result? No reform!

Continued under Leo X, it heard bold speeches for reform, but it confirmed the notorious *Unam Sanctam* of Boniface VIII — Every human being is subject to the Pope. Von Doellinger sadly said, "The last hopes for a reform of the Church were carried to the grave." That was on March 16, 1517.

On October 31, 1517, Luther posted his Ninety-five Theses.

When all Europe failed, and failed again, and failed yet again, to reform the Church, Luther alone reformed the Church. How?

"Ye are a royal priesthood." 1 Pet. 2:9. This has its roots in justification by faith.

With this fulcrum of St. Peter the "successor" of St. Peter was dislodged by Archimedes Luther, and the world was moved into a new course. That laid the ax to the root of the upas-tree with all its poisonous fruits.

### **"Ye Are a Royal Priesthood"**

These characteristic words are under the characteristic portrait of Walther, and they are characteristic of the man — as it seems to the writer. They sum up the life-work of the man and explain his devout and chivalrous respect for the congregation. "Ye are a royal priesthood." Priest is a glorious title of Christ, and priest is a glorious title of the Christian. Peter lays his apostolic hands upon all Christians and calls them a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. 2:5, 9. Justified by faith, they are clothed in the garments of salvation of Christ's own righteousness, and they serve and worship God in the beauty of holiness.

On Christ Jesus Himself, the living and chief Cornerstone, ye also as lively stones are builded up a holy spiritual temple in the Lord for a habitation of God in the Spirit, 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Cor. 3:17.

Impressed with this lofty conception of the congregation, Walther had for it the profoundest respect. He served it devoutly and with a godly jealousy. He would have no strange fire upon its altar. He would not have Dagon



set up with the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle. What concord hath Christ with Belial? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people, 2 Cor. 6:14-16.

Again, Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish, Eph. 5:25-27.

What boundless love in the spiritual Bridegroom! At what an enormous cost He wooed and won His spiritual Bride! How brilliant, radiant, glorious, in the beauty of holiness is this real Queen of heaven!

John Baptist was the Bridegroom's friend and pointed the Bride to her Bridegroom and rejoiced in the joy of the Bridegroom, decreased while He increased, John 3:28-30.

Paul wrote his congregation: "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ," 2 Cor. 11:2.

In the spirit of the Baptist and of Paul did Walther show his holy reverence for the congregation.

### Walther's Respect for the Congregation

"You must again and yet again draw everything through the Scriptures — even the Confessions."

The Confessions themselves demand this. (*Triglotta*, 777, 779; 853, 855.)

Walther heartily accepted the Confessions as fully agreeing with Scripture. Scripture, however, is the norm that makes the Confessions normal.

He knew quite well there were strong men before Agamemnon, and he venerated the venerable Fathers of the Church, and he humbly called himself a mere pupil of Father Luther. He eagerly called on them to *witness* to the truth of his teaching but never, never, to *prove* the truth of his teaching. His proof was drawn from the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible. Look at the man — perfectly willing to be bound by Scripture: per-

fectly unwilling to be bound by anything else. There is perfect dependence on God's Word and perfect independence of everything but God's Word.

He would give the congregation nothing but the unadulterated milk of the Word that they might grow thereby unto salvation, 1 Pet. 2:2. He gave them the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth — "as truth is in Jesus," "the truth which is after godliness," Eph. 4:21; Titus 1:1.

### Walther's Respect for the Congregation

"Every sermon must be a work of art" — and he suited the action to the word.

"He polished his sermons till the very minute he had to go into the pulpit," said Dr. Pieper.

Broemel's *Homiletic Characters* begin with Chrysostom and end with Walther — "orthodox as John Gerhard and correct as a court preacher." He was a finished homiletic artist. His words were fitly spoken, like apples of gold in network of silver, Eccles. 25:11.

When once a preacher did not appear, Walther would not step in — "I am not prepared." He would give the congregation only the very best that was in him.

### Walther's Respect for the Congregation

Walther would have intelligent members of the congregation, and so he trained them in school and after confirmation in young people's societies.

He founded a Bible society in order to give the congregation the pure text of Luther's translation.

He founded a society to publish Luther's works in order that the congregation might have wholesome spiritual food.

He compiled a hymnal in order that the congregation might sing pure Lutheran Gospel hymns. And for years he gave of his precious time to train choirs to lead the congregation in the singing of the exquisite and peerless Lutheran chorals in the service of the sanctuary. He taught according to Paul's words: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord," Col. 3:16.

### Walther's Respect for the Congregation

He appealed to the congregation in sermons, lectures, addresses, papers, pamphlets, books, *Der Lutheraner*, *Lehre und Wehre*. He spoke to the congregation as to men and women, not as to children. He was filled with the spirit of Paul — "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say," 1 Cor. 10:15.

"Rob the congregation of the right to judge doctrine, and you give them over into slavery."

"I bow to the humblest member coming with Scripture." He said it: he did it.

### Walther's Respect for the Congregation

"We have no power but the power of the Word" — a word the writer ever followed as a guiding star. In one word a world of pastoral wisdom and ecclesiastical statesmanship!

Peter calls the congregation "the flock of God . . . redeemed with the precious blood of Christ." And in the spirit of Peter our Doctor never dreamed of lording it over God's flock but was an ensample to the flock, 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; 5:2, 3. The Chief Shepherd's under-shepherd, Walther knew his place and kept his place, tending the flock of God, making them lie down in green pastures, leading them beside still waters, and preparing a table before them in the presence of their enemies.

"We have no power but the power of the Word — but we *have* the power of the Word!" And he used the power of the Word when the sheep would stray from the fold. Every inch "the polite Saxon," he did not crook the pregnant hinges of the knee that thrift might follow fawning. He did not curry favor with any one. He disdained to use his personal prestige to carry a measure. Far from him, and far beneath him, the thought of stooping to log-rolling or wire-pulling. The Word of God, and that only, was his trowel and his sword.

When wolves came to destroy the sheep, he put on the whole armor of God and with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, he fought many a hot battle to defend the congregation. And the God of battles was

with him and gave him the victory. "So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me; for I trust in Thy Word," Ps. 119:42.

"I trust in Thy Word." That word of the psalmist was the secret of the strength of Walther. On the way to a colloquium on chiliasm and the resurrection he prayed God for a word to give victory to the truth. God gave it: "It is appointed unto men *once* to die but *after this* the Judgment," Heb. 9:27. Walther was jubilant — "A mathematical proof!"

"Let no one wrest the sword of the Word out of your hand, for then you are lost."

"Ye are a royal priesthood," is the Sword of the Spirit with which he defended the rights of the congregation against the tyranny of the Pope, the dominion of the bishop, the rule of the ruling elder, the hierarchy of the pastor and the synod. With this Word of God he stood guard over the universal priesthood of all believers and the freedom for which Christ set them free and kept them from again being entangled in the yoke of bondage.

### Walther's Respect for the Congregation

That profound respect was made permanent in the constitution he gave his congregation. There the Bride of Christ stands forth in the beauty of freedom won by the heavenly Bridegroom.

This constitution became the model for many other congregations; and it was fitted to be the constitution of the Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. That constitution is the palladium of a Free Church in a Free State.

What Walther did, that Walther taught; taught by what he said from Scripture and taught by what he was. His words bored deep, because they were backed by a dynamic character and career.

### Walther's Respect for the Congregation

"Ye are a royal priesthood"—as such Walther respected the congregation and by God's Word led it to respect itself as such. It was never to step down from this sublime position in order to meddle with politics, nor to beg the State for laws to aid the congregation.

Owing to circumstances beyond his control, Luther could not fully carry out his ideal of complete separation of Church and State; it was carried out by Walther, carried out in principle and also in practise. Here, too, the disciple did greater work than his master.

Fifty years ago the very aged Dr. John G. Morris, "the Sage of Lutherville," said to the writer: "I have respect for my General Synod: it doesn't claim to be strict, and it isn't strict. I have no respect for the General Council: it claims to be strict, but it isn't strict. I have respect for the Missouri Synod: it claims to be strict, and it is strict."

He was an ardent admirer of Walther — "an organizing genius as great as John Wesley." And he paraphrased the old war-song about John Brown —

"Dr. Walther's body lies a-moldering in the grave,  
But his soul goes marching on."

"Marching on," please God, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in a light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal!  
Amen.

W. D.

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## "The Voice of Our Church on the Question Concerning the Church and the Ministry"<sup>1)</sup>

### 1. The Provocation

The title-page of this treatise declares that it was written "to repel the attacks of Pastor Grabau of Buffalo, N. Y."

According to the published records of one of his closest coworkers Pastor J. A. A. Grabau had come to America with a considerable following towards the end of 1839, eight months after the arrival in St. Louis of Pastor Martin Stephan and his followers. Grabau had staunchly resisted the Prussian "Union," by which King Frederick William III had attempted to merge the Lutheran and the Reformed

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1) *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt.*

churches of Germany into one State-controlled "evangelical" organization. Twice he had suffered imprisonment for his energetic resistance to the royal mandate, which he felt as an intolerable coercion of his Christian conscience and a fatal infringement upon his religious liberty, guaranteed by the Peace of Osnabrueck at the close of the Thirty Years' War in 1648. Grabau with his adherents left Germany after obtaining the king's permission to emigrate and settled in and near Buffalo. So far, so good.

Not so good was an idea which Grabau connected with his emigration. He held that, when his group of Lutherans quit the king's country, the Church was emigrating from Prussia to America. This idea was embodied figuratively in the seal of the Buffalo Synod, which he organized in 1845. It showed a woman with an infant in her arms fleeing from a dragon. The explanation is found in Rev. 12:1-6. The woman is the Church of Christ; the dragon, the Prussian Union; the wilderness, America. This was rather rude to the Prussians and a dubious compliment to "God's country."

Pastor Grabau set to work organizing his "Church" in accordance with the old Pomeranian statutes that had been enforced in Germany with the aid of the civil authorities. This enforcement was of course impossible in the United States, where Church and State are separated in principle. It was to be made possible here by establishing a strong church government. At its head was to be Pastor Grabau as Senior of the Clergy, who, with him, were to rule the laity. The "Church" was viewed as the visible aggregate composed of ministers, whose function was to instruct their parishioners and direct all church affairs, and laymen, whose duty it was to hear and obey.

In a Pastoral Letter of December 1, 1840, Pastor Grabau explained in detail his ideal of a Lutheran Church in America. The letter was sent also to the Lutheran colonists who had followed Stephan to St. Louis and Perry County, Missouri. These men had had personal experience with a hierarchical tendency in their own midst, which they had just overcome. They sensed a similar trend in Grabau's proposal. In their name Pastor Loeber, on July 3, 1843,

asked for further explanation of points in the letter that seemed doubtful to them. They did not join in organizing Pastor Grabau's "Synod of the Lutheran Church Emigrated from Prussia," or Buffalo Synod, and were charged with catering to the popular American idea of democracy by teaching that all authority in the Church of Christ lodges in the hearts of His believers and all church power is exercised by them, jointly and severally, whether they be clergymen or laymen. This position was denounced as unscriptural and un-Lutheran and as fostering a dangerous independistic spirit among church people. In the ranks of the followers of Pastor Grabau dissension arose owing to arbitrary acts of the dominating ministerium. The Missouri Synod, which had been organized in 1847 on the basis of congregational sovereignty and autonomy, not only had to operate at times in the same territory with the Buffalo Synod but was also appealed to by dissatisfied followers of Grabau for counsel, direction, and service. For this they were not only branded as proselyters, but the validity of their ministry was denied. They and those whom they served were publicly pilloried as "mobs," "rebels," "renegades," and "apostates from the faith" once delivered unto the saints.

These were the assaults which Walther sought to repulse by his treatise on the Church and the Ministry.

However, the scope of Walther's effort extended beyond Pastor Grabau and the Buffalo Synod. The earliest Lutheran organizations in America were not called "synods" but "ministeria." To their conventions laymen might be brought along by their pastors, but they had no determining voice in the deliberations of their church-body. Furthermore, the great national Lutheran churches of Europe were state affairs, under the sovereign control of monarchs as their highest church dignitaries, who exercised spiritual government over their people through ministers of cult, archbishops, bishops, superintendents. These, in turn, directed the activities of the pastors. The rights of laymen to direct their own church affairs, except in a few isolated instances, were ignored by common consent or openly denied.

Pastor Grabau's ideal "Church" had so much in common

with the existing Lutheran church-bodies at that time that an attack upon his organization was really a challenge to all the Lutheran ministeria in America and all the national Lutheran churches of Europe. They were all hierarchically oriented and ingrained. What Walther attempted by his treatise was something unheard of since Luther and the early days of the Reformation. It was throwing down the gauntlet to every type of arrogant Lutheran clericalism throughout the world. Walther regarded the denial of the personal right of self-decision in religious matters to the humblest believer in Christ and of his supreme authority in the Church as wicked arrogance. He championed the rights of the Christian with his treatise on the Church and the Ministry. Coming from a still little-known author on the American frontier of civilization, it was a remarkable feat of spiritual daring.

The draft of the treatise was submitted in 1851 to the Fifth Convention of the Missouri Synod at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and discussed in eight sessions. Unanimously the convention voted its enthusiastic approval of Walther's effort and ordered its publication. During a visit at Erlangen that same year Walther engaged the well-known firm of Andreas Deichert for this work, and from their presses the first edition of the treatise was issued in 1852. Of the four later editions which followed Walther edited the second and the third. This latter gives the quotations from Greek Church Fathers in the original, and since it is the last *manu-propria* edition of his work, it is the one to which all references are made in this article.

However, when the book came off the press, it made its bow to the readers not as an erudite elaboration of the learned Walther but as "a testimony of the faith of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States." The author has completely effaced himself in his treatise, except on the title-page. He does not even sign his name to the very illuminating "Introductory Remarks." The treatise is evidently regarded by him no longer as his own, to promulgate his private opinions, but it is an official manifesto of the Missouri Synod, which here offers to its Christian brethren everywhere and forever its humble witness to the truth which it has joyously



embraced on these great basic questions: What is the Church? and, What is the Ministry of the Church? Let Walther's synodical posterity take notice of this fact: In Walther's *Kirche und Amt* spoke — and still speaks! — not a single, deservedly revered individual but the entire God-blessed Missouri Synod, whom this treatise of Walther helped to make into a sound, staunch, faithful herald of genuine Lutheranism.

## 2. The Method of the Argument

*Church and the Ministry* is a polemical essay. However, only once, on the title-page, Walther names his immediate opponent. Throughout the treatise there are numerous references to outcroppings of clerical autocracy in the history of the Christian Church, chiefly to Romanism and Romanizing tendencies in Protestantism, but nowhere is there a studied, systematic discussion of their tenets. They are introduced simply for the sake of illustration.

Here is a lesson in Christian polemics. The most effectual defense of truth is plain truth itself. Truth is self-authenticating. When it steps upon the field of battle unpanoplied with the Goliath armament of human cunning, not varnished with the war-paint of the savage, in the dignity of its innate strength, it is unconquerable like David with his shepherd's sling. It does not have to engage in wordy harangues like the Homeric warriors before they came to blows, to work up the necessary psychosis of aggressive complexes; it needs simply to state: "This is so; this is not so," and the battle is won, let the defeated keep on howling as much and as long as they please. Alas! that the spokesmen for the truth have not always remembered in their warfare for Christianity that the weapon alone which they wielded, not anything that they might contribute to the conflict by their own dexterity, ingenuity, and *bravour* must achieve the victory.

True, the Word of God, as Luther, the great fighter, has observed, is always a battle, a military campaign. True, personalities cannot always be avoided in the polemics of Christians, as the examples of Christ Himself and of Paul show. Nevertheless a sublime objectiveness, a heavenly disregard of what is merely human also in a Christian

combatant, is the true glory of Christian warfare. In this feature the treatise on the Church and the Ministry notably excels.

The charge had been hurled against the Missouri Synod that its position on the points in controversy was unscriptural and un-Lutheran. Evidently, then, the rebuttal must come out of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Accordingly, Walther first sets up theses — nine for the doctrine of the Church, ten for the doctrine of the Ministry — in which he has crystallized detailed points of doctrine which are affected by the controversy.

Next he selects pertinent Scripture-texts, by which he purposes to substantiate each thesis. "Here it is written!" — that is to be the backbone of the argument. "The Word of God shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel" — that maxim of the Lutheran Reformation goes into effect in these portions of the treatise. (*Trigl. Conc.*, p. 467, § 15.)

But does not this involve interpretation? And is not interpretation *man's* effort to restate what God has spoken? Moreover, do not the exegetes differ in their interpretations? So they have done and will continue to do "till prophecies cease." There has been a strife of tongues in the Church; but that has not deterred Paul from encouraging Christians "to stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel," Phil. 2:27. Exegesis is the act of bringing out of the Scriptures what God has put into it. The Spirit that breathed into holy men the words with which they were to express the thoughts of God now breathes out of those God-given utterances the meaning that God put into them and produces conviction by means of those words in the hearts of men that they have grasped God's mind and understand what He has told them. The right and the duty of private judgment are never impaired by the interpretation of another; but it can be clarified, strengthened, and confirmed by the understanding which another has gained of a given Bible-text.

It is proper that men watch those who are handling the Word of Truth and are showing how it must be understood and applied in order that they may not be misled

by a faulty interpretation. But to detect a faulty interpretation, what other means is there than the very text that has been wrongly expounded? The real interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself, or the Spirit who gave, and who lays hold with His inward testimony on those whom He approaches with, the Word.

Occasionally the Lord has made His messengers to men "eat" the message which they were to deliver, Ezek. 2:8-3:4; Jer. 15:16; Rev. 10:9-11. The symbolical action of "eating," as appears from the context, signifies that an efficient proclaimer of the divine will has taken what he is to announce completely up into himself and has so thoroughly digested it that, when he delivers the message, he speaks from the abundance of his own heart. Walther has taken up into himself the Scriptures which he cites so thoroughly that he reproduces them as self-understood. They cannot mean anything else than what they have meant to him. Therefore he introduces them with very little comment.

From the Scriptures he proceeds to the Lutheran Confessions, which shall corroborate what he has asserted in his theses and reaffirms in his Scripture proofs. The full title which he gave his treatise reads: *The Voice of Our Church on the Question Concerning the Church and the Ministry*. Historic Lutheranism speaking through its public and official utterances—from 1530 to 1580—is echoing the teaching of Scripture in these portions of Walther's book.

Walther's versatility in handling the Book of Concord is phenomenal. He is thoroughly at home in the Lutheran Confessions. Promptly he puts his fingers on a certain spot in the Augsburg Confession or its Apology or the Smalcald Articles or the Catechisms or the Formula of Concord. You look, and—sure enough!—there is the evidence that the Lutheran Confessions have said what *Church and Ministry* allege, 300 years before this book was written.

Some of the citations run through several pages in the original. They are broken up by marks of omission. In these instances Walther acts like a surveyor who is tracing a desert river which suddenly disappears to appear in

another spot, or like a miner who is following a vein of ore that is broken up into sections. He knows where the initial thought to which he had pointed bobs to the surface again in the text in the course of the argument. When he has finished, he has indeed succeeded in bringing out in clear accents what the Lutheran Church has said on the points under dispute. He has made the old mother Church tell her children of a later age: "Here is the true way. Follow therein!"

Next Walther takes his readers into the private writings of the great leaders of the Lutheran Church, who have defended her tenets in many a doctrinal conflict, have systematized her teachings, and have shaped her development into a sound, strong church-body. From Luther, the protagonist for a Church restored to her pristine, apostolic purity of teaching and practise, down to Hollaz, the last of the great dogmaticians of Lutheranism, he draws testimony upon testimony to show how they had consistently understood and applied the Scriptures and the Confessions as to what the Church of Jesus Christ really is and what authority and functions the Lord has actually assigned to it. Pastor Grabau had, in a manner, invited this part of Walther's argument by citing, in the original Latin, rather obscure Lutheran writers for his claims. Walther dips into the cream of old Lutheran literature and brings out the best, the ripest utterances of our former champions in good German renderings, with the original Latin in footnotes for checking up on his translation.<sup>2)</sup>

In their contentions with Rome the Lutheran Reformers frequently had to appeal to the earliest Greek and Latin Church Fathers in order to make evident that their teach-

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2) The writers here quoted are Luther (133 excerpts), Gerhard (65), Chemnitz (18), Quenstedt (13), Dannhauer (12), Calov (9), Balduin (8), Baier (5), J. B. Carpzov (5), Huelsemann (5); writers quoted one to four times: H. Barnerus, Brenz, Brochmand, Dedekennus, Deyling, Flacius, S. Froeschel, J. Gallus, J. K. Goebel, Z. Grapius, Heilbrunner, Hollaz, Aeg. Hunnius, Kromayer, Leyser, J. Martini, B. Meisner, J. Meisner, Melancthon, Menzer, J. Mueller (Moeller), S. Schmidt, V. Seckendorf, Selnecker, J. G. Walch, Wigand, G. Zeaemann. There are also a few quotations from catechisms and other official declarations.

ing was not anything new in the Church. Accordingly, Walther adds to his argument, for good measure, references also to the patristic literature of the Christian Church and therewith concludes his plea,<sup>3)</sup> as if to say: What the Missouri Synod contends for in these theses is, first of all, the teaching of the Lord Jesus and of His prophets and apostles. From Him the Lutheran confessors and writers took their directives in organizing their Church and in so doing reverted to the most ancient position which the Church had taken immediately after the Lord had ascended to glory and His first chosen spokesmen had laid down their pens. A great host of witnesses is testifying to the truth of God's Word and Luther's doctrine.

### 3. The Theses on the Church, with the Scripture Proof

Walther is a thoroughly German writer, and the German which he writes is a poser. Few of the present generation of his professed followers do understand him any longer. To make him talk intelligent English and to speak idiomatically in our tongue, his ponderous, formidably involved clauses have had to be taken apart wherever this was at all feasible. However, in every instance Walther's connectives have been reproduced, so that there is never a conscious deviation from the logic in his constructions.

Another difficulty which the translator encountered — and the reader will encounter — is this: Walther's proof-texts are quoted from Luther's German Bible. This differs from the English King James Version, as everybody knows who has had to work with both renderings. The construction of the terms in a given clause is not always identical in both versions. Idiomatic words and phrases of the German Bible, in which Luther made God talk German to his Germans, have not always their exact counterparts in English. Luther's "*Hausehre*" in Ps. 68:12 is poorly rendered by "she that tarried at home"; "hearing" in Rom. 10:17 for Luther's "*Predigt*" weakens Walther's argu-

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3) Early Fathers quoted: Augustine (18 excerpts), Ambrose, Bernard, Chrysostom, Cyprian, Ignatius, Irenaeus, Jerome, Origen, Tertullian, and others.

ment; etc., etc. It is a question whether Jas. 3:1 in Thesis I on the Ministry really proves as readily in the English version what Walther wants it to prove. If there were space, this matter would deserve a special chapter.

Happily, in no instance except Joel 2:23 is the essence of Walther's argument affected by these differences. Also the English text of the Scriptures supports his reasoning fully. What he taught in German is just as true in English; only the expression of his thoughts is not always as catching, captivating, charming, in our vernacular as it is assuredly in Luther's.

### THESIS I

*The Church, in the proper sense of the term, is the communion of saints, that is, the sum total of all those who have been called by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel from out of the lost and condemned human race, who truly believe in Christ, and who have been sanctified by this faith and incorporated into Christ.*

#### Proof from the Word of God

Thus writes the holy Apostle Paul, Eph. 1:22, 23: "And [God] hath put all things under His feet and gave Him [Christ] to be *the Head* over all things *to the Church, which is the body*, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Since Christ, according to this text, is the Head of the Church, and the latter is His body, the true Church, properly so called, is the sum total of all those who are united with Christ as the members of a body are with their head.

Again, the same apostle writes, Eph. 5:23-27: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, *as the Church is subject unto Christ*, so let the wives be to their own husbands *in everything*. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it that He might *sanctify and cleanse* it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a *glorious* (ἐνδοξον) Church, *not having spot or wrinkle* or any such thing but that it should be *holy and without blemish*."

Again, the same apostle writes, 1 Cor. 3:16, 17: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for *the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.*" This is also the reason why the same apostle calls the Church "*the Church of the first-born which are written in heaven,*" Heb. 12:23.

Thus speaks the Lord regarding His Church, Matt. 16:18: "Upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The Church, then, in the proper sense of the term, is built, as regards its members, on the rock of Christ and His Word. Upon this rock, however, only he is built who by a living faith makes it his foundation.

Finally, thus writes the holy evangelist John in his gospel, chap. 11:51, 52: "Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one *the children of God* that were scattered abroad." Hence the Church which Jesus came into the world and died to establish and gather is the sum total of the children of God.

## THESIS II

*To the Church in the proper sense of the term belongs no godless person, no hypocrite, no one who has not been regenerated, no heretic.*

### Proof from the Word of God

Thus writes St. Paul, Rom. 8:9: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Now, if a person does not belong to Christ, neither is he a member of the true Church, which is His spiritual body.

Again, thus writes St. John in his First Epistle, chap. 2:19, regarding hypocrites, who ultimately quit also external connection with the Church: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

Again, the Lord says, John 15:6: "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered."

## THESIS III

*The Church, in the proper sense of the term, is invisible.*

## Proof from the Word of God

Thus speaks the Lord, Luke 17:20, 21: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

Again, thus writes St. Peter in his First Epistle, chap. 2:5: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up *a spiritual house*, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Accordingly, the true Church is a spiritual, hence not a visible, building.

Again, the holy Apostle Paul writes, 2 Tim. 2:19: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, *The Lord knoweth them that are His*. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Accordingly, the Lord alone knows them that are His; now, only those who are the Lord's constitute the true Church; hence no man can see the Church. (Compare here the proof-texts for Thesis I.)

## THESIS IV

*This true Church of believers and saints it is to which Christ has given the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Therefore this Church is the real and sole holder and bearer of the spiritual, divine, and heavenly blessings, rights, powers, offices, etc., which Christ has gained and which are available in His Church.*

## Proof from the Word of God

Thus it is written Matt. 16:15-19: "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jonas; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind



on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Here Christ testifies what power *those* possess who with Peter are built upon the Rock, namely, those who believe in Him and with their mouths profess this faith of their hearts; hence, in a word, His true *Church*, His holy, believing congregation, which is His body, that is, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

Again, it is written in Matt. 18:18: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Here Christ testifies that what He had just addressed to Peter applies to all His disciples.

Again, it is stated in John 20:22, 23: "And when He had said this, He breathed on them and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Here Christ testifies that only the communion of those who have the Holy Spirit, hence the holy Christian Church, can open or close heaven.

Again, the Lord says, Matt. 28:20, at His departure from the world: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Now, if Christ is with His people, they have with Him all things.

Again, thus says John the Baptist, John 3:28, 29: "Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the *bride* is the bridegroom." Accordingly, since the communion of believers is the bride of Christ, this communion is also the true holder of the possessions of Christ, its Bridegroom. Compare 2 Cor. 11:2: "I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (For this reason the high priest, as a symbolical representative of the coming Christ, could marry only a virgin. Lev. 21:13, 14.) Eph. 5:32: "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." According to this text Christ is married to His congregation; she, then, is the wife or matron in Christ's house. Hence already David spoke of her prophetically in Ps. 68:12, saying: "She that tarried at home" (Luther: "*Die Haus-*

*ehre*," that is, the mistress of the house) "divided the spoil." That means, as the *Weimar Bible* interprets, "the blessings which Christ has achieved by His combat and victory."

Thus writes the holy Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. 3:21-23: "Therefore let no man glory in men. For *all things are yours*; whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." We gather from this that all that even a Paul and a Peter possessed were nothing but goods from the treasury of believing Christians, or of the Church.

Again, the same apostle writes, Gal. 4:26, concerning the Church of the New Testament: "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Hence everything by which God's children are born belongs to the Church.

Finally, St. Peter writes to the believing Christians, 1 Pet. 2:9: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

## THESIS V

*Although the true Church, in the proper sense of the term, is invisible as to its essence, yet its presence is perceivable, its marks being the pure preaching of the Word of God and the administration of the holy Sacraments in accordance with their institution by Christ.*

### Proof from the Word of God

Holy Scripture tells us: "So is the kingdom of God [that is, the Church] as if a man should cast seed into the ground and should sleep and rise night and day and the seed should spring and grow up *he knoweth not how*," Mark 4:26, 27. However, Scripture tells us likewise what this seed is; it says: "The Sower soweth the Word," v. 14. Hence, according to Scripture the Word of God is the seed from which the members of the Church, or, in the language of Scripture, "the children of the kingdom," Matt. 13:38, sprout forth and are generated. At the same

time, however, God issues in Scripture the precious promise: "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven and returneth not thither but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it," Is. 55:10, 11. We see from this, not only that the Word of God is the seed from which *alone* the members of the Church are born, but also that from it there *certainly* bud forth always, wheresoever this heavenly seed is sown, some "children of the kingdom," "without men's knowing how," in accordance with the divine, undeceivable, and infallible promise. Wherever, therefore, this seed is sown, there the Church indeed is not seen, but there we have an undeceivable mark (criterion) that the Church, that a group of true believers and saints in Christ Jesus, a congregation of children of God, exists.

According to Holy Scripture, however, also the holy Sacraments, besides the Word of God, are the means by which the Church, the holy congregation of God, is to be founded, gathered, preserved, and is to spread. For according to Matt. 28:18-20 and Mark 16:16 the Lord gives to the agents whom He has chosen this command and promise: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Hence in every place where, besides the use (application) of the Word, Holy Baptism is administered, the portals of the Church are opened invisibly; there persons are found who believe and are saved; there the Lord is present with His grace; there we have an undeceivable mark that the Church exists in that place; there we must say with Jacob: "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God,

and this is the gate of heaven," Gen. 28:16, 17. Scripture says the same also regarding the Holy Supper of the Lord; for thus it is written in 1 Cor. 10:17: "For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread"; and 1 Cor. 12:13: "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body . . . and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Therefore, where the Word of God is preached, Holy Baptism and the Sacrament of the body and blood of Jesus Christ are administered, there are members of the body of Jesus Christ. There we must believe: Here is a holy Christian church.

### THESIS VI

*In an improper sense the term "Church," according to Holy Scripture, is applied also to the visible sum total of all who have been called, that is, to all who profess allegiance to the Word of God that is preached and make use of the holy Sacraments. This Church (the universal [catholic] Church) is made up of good and evil persons. Particular divisions of it, namely, the congregations found here and there, in which the Word of God is preached and the holy Sacraments are administered, are called churches (particular churches), for the reason, namely, that in these visible groups the invisible, true Church of the believers, saints, and children of God is concealed, and because no elect persons are to be looked for outside of the group of those who have been called.*

### Proof from the Word of God

The Lord says: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that is cast into the sea and gathered of every kind; which, when it was full, they drew to shore and sat down and gathered the good into vessels but cast the bad away," Matt. 13:47, 48. Again: "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish," Matt. 25:1, 2. Again: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son. . . . And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment," Matt. 22:2, 11.

In these passages the Lord plainly shows by the little particle "like" that the kingdom of heaven, or the Church in the proper sense of the term, is not made up indeed of good and evil persons, of true believers and hypocrites, but that the Church in this life has an appearance like unto a net full of good and bad fishes or a gathering of wise and foolish virgins, or a marriage-hall filled with guests that are well attired and such as lack a wedding-garment. Hence to the visible Church, which comprises good and evil persons, true and false Christians, orthodox and such as are erring in faith, the name "Church" can belong, and can be accorded, only *in an improper, synecdochical sense*; that is to say, the whole bears this glorious name merely on account of a part of it, to which alone this name belongs in the proper sense. Accordingly, the entire visible group of all who have been called bears the name of "the universal Church" and the individual parts of this group the name of "churches," or "particular churches," on account of the true members of the true Church who are found among them, even though they were only baptized infants.

However, to the entire visible group who have among them the Word of God and the Sacraments the name "Church" is accorded, not by a misuse of the term but by right. That it must be accorded to them is shown by Holy Scripture, which clearly teaches that only the true believers are real members of the Church; and yet it accords the name "church" also to such mixed visible groups. Thus we read in Matt. 18:17: "Tell it unto the church." Manifestly the reference in this passage is to a visible particular church, consisting of true and false Christians. Again, the holy Apostle Paul calls those, who were called in Galatia and at Corinth, "churches"; yea, the latter he calls "the Church of God, . . . them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints," Gal. 1:2; 1 Cor. 1:2. This the holy apostle does spite of the fact that he testifies regarding the Galatians that most of them had lost Christ, and regarding the Corinthian congregation, that it had many members who were contaminated in doctrine and life and had grievously fallen.

### THESIS VII

*Even as the visible communions in which the Word and the Sacraments still exist in their essence bear, according to God's Word, the name of CHURCHES because of the true invisible Church of the true believers contained in them, so likewise they, because of the true, invisible Church concealed in them, though there be but two or three, possess the POWER which Christ has given to His entire Church.*

#### Proof from the Word of God

Thus says the Lord, Matt. 18:17: "Tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." No proof is needed to show that the Lord in this passage is speaking of a visible particular, local, church. However, when immediately after those words the Lord proceeds thus: "Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," v. 18, He manifestly delegates with these words also to each visible local church the keys of the kingdom of heaven, or that church power which, in Peter, He had given to His entire holy Church in Matt. 16:19. However, lest we imagine that this great power were given only to great, populous congregations, He adds vv. 19 and 20: "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Accordingly, if in a local congregation there were only two or three true believers, true children of God, true members of the spiritual body of Jesus Christ, the congregation would on account of them be a congregation of God and in legitimate possession of all rights and powers which Christ has acquired for, and given to, His Church.

### THESIS VIII

*While God gathers for Himself a holy Church of the elect in places where the Word of God is not preached in entire purity and the holy Sacraments are not administered*

*altogether in accordance with their institution by Jesus Christ, — provided the Word of God and the Sacraments are not utterly denied but essentially remain in those places, — still every one is obliged, for the sake of his salvation, to flee from all false teachers and to avoid all heterodox churches, or sects and, on the other hand, to profess allegiance, and adhere, to orthodox congregations and their orthodox preachers wherever he finds such.*

*A. Also in erring, heretical congregations there are children of God; also in them the true Church becomes manifest by means of the remnants of the pure Word of God and the Sacraments that still remain in them.*

#### **Proof from the Word of God**

When the holy apostle designates the Galatians who have been called as congregations, or "*churches*," addressing his epistle "unto the churches of Galatia," Gal. 1:2, it follows without question that also in these communions there still remained a hidden seed of a Church of true believers.

Compare 1 Kings 19:14 and 18. Here we see that also where the priests of Baal were dominant, a holy Church of 7,000 elect, who were unknown even to the prophet Elijah, had been preserved. People such as these adhere to Christ inwardly by a living faith, while outwardly they follow their false leaders because they do "not know the depths of Satan," Rev. 2:24. They are like those 200 men who joined the insurgent Absalom and his rabble of rebels but "went in their simplicity and knew not anything," 2 Sam. 15:11.

*B. Every one is obliged, for the sake of his salvation, to flee all false prophets and to avoid fellowship with heterodox churches, or sects.*

#### **Proof from the Word of God**

Not a few, when they hear that the Church is wherever there are still essentials of the Word of God and the Sacraments, draw this conclusion: It is a matter of indifference whether one attaches himself to an orthodox or to a heterodox communion; for even if one joins a heterodox congregation, one is still in the Church and can still be

saved. However, this is an error. True, the reason why one must sever his connection with a communion of erring people is not this, that otherwise one cannot be in the Church. It is also true that many are saved who from lack of knowledge adhere outwardly to sects and yet abide in the true faith. But what is gained by being in the Church if one is not of the Church, does not belong to it? Now, a person who has *learned to know* the false doctrine of the sects and of their teachers and still adheres to them is indeed still in the Church but not of the Church. He does not belong to the divine seed that lies concealed among the sects. His fellowshiping the sect is not a sin of weakness, which can coexist with a state of grace. Such a person wantonly acts contrary to the Word of God; for God commands us in His holy Word to flee and avoid false teachers and their counterfeit worship. As little as the doctrine that Christians in a state of grace still have sins of weakness justifies those who for this reason imagine that they may knowingly and wilfully continue in sin, as surely as those who sin trusting in grace are rather children of perdition, so little does the doctrine that even among the sects there are children of God justify those who, contrary to God's command, knowingly remain with them, and so surely such wanton participants in the corruption of the Word of Truth are children of perdition. For thus it is written:

Deut. 13:1-3: "If there rise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams and giveth thee a sign or a wonder and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them, thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord, your God, proveth you to know whether ye love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul."

Matt. 7:15: "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing; but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*"

Matt. 24:23, 24: "Then, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall show great



signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

Acts 20:30, 31: "Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

Rom. 16:17, 18: "Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

1 Cor. 10:18, 21: "Behold Israel after the flesh; are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? ... Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table and of the table of devils." 1 Cor. 11:19: "For there must be also heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."

2 Cor. 6:14-18: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Gal. 5:9: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

Titus 3:10, 11: "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself."

2 John 10, 11: "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed; for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds."

Rev. 18:4: "Come out of her [Babylon], My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues."

*C. Every Christian is obliged, for the sake of his salvation, to profess allegiance, and adhere, to orthodox congregations and their orthodox preachers wherever he finds such.*

#### Proof from the Word of God

The Lord says: "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven," Matt. 10:32, 33.

Again: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He shall come in His own glory and in His Father's and of the holy angels," Luke 9:26.

Finally, His holy apostle writes: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom. 10:9, 10.

According to these texts a person cannot be saved who in his heart indeed wants to carry with him faith in Christ and His truth but will not confess it with the mouth. Hence every Christian, for the sake of his salvation, is obliged publicly to renounce those whom he has recognized as falsifiers of the truth of Christ and publicly to profess fellowship and hold with those whom he has recognized as witnesses for Christ and His unadulterated truth.

Therefore the Lord says furthermore: "He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me," Luke 10:16. "Whosoever shall not receive you nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment than for that city. . . . He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me. *He that receiveth a prophet in*

*the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward,"* Matt. 10:14, 15, 40, 41.

Accordingly St. Paul writes to Timothy: "Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord *nor of me, His prisoner*, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God," 2 Tim. 1:8.

However, God's Word also states distinctly that a Christian should hold fellowship with those who profess the true faith and that he must be careful not to cause separations and divisions, whether it be by word or deed. For thus it is written: "Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ *that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you* but that ye be perfectly joined together *in the same mind and in the same judgment*. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe that there are contentions among you. Now, this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" 1 Cor. 1:10-13.

Again: "*Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all," Eph. 4:3-6.

Finally: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; *for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us*; but they went out that they might be manifest that they were not all of us," 1 John 2:19.

All these are reasons on which the apostle's exhortation is based: "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*, as the manner of some is," Heb. 10:25, and the statement of the Lord: "*If he neglect to hear the church*, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican," Matt. 18:17.

Hence we are informed regarding the first Christians, not only that "they continued steadfastly in the apostles'

doctrine," but also that they continued "in fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers. . . . And all that believed were together. . . . And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. *And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved,*" Acts 2:42, 44, 46, 47.

### THESIS IX

*The only indispensable requisite for obtaining salvation is fellowship with the invisible Church, to which all those glorious promises that concern the Church were originally given.*

#### Proof from the Word of God

The Word of God says: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law," Rom. 3:28. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," Acts 4:12.

According to these texts the *unconditional* and *sole* requirement for salvation is fellowship with Christ through *faith*. The maxim "Outside of the Church there is no salvation," "Whoever has not the Church on earth for his mother has not God in heaven for his Father," is true only in this sense, that outside of the invisible Church there is no salvation and no state of grace for a child of God. For this has no other meaning than that "there is no salvation outside of *Christ*"; for whoever is not in inward fellowship with the believers and saints is neither in fellowship with Christ. On the other hand, whoever is in fellowship with Christ is in fellowship also with all those in whom Christ dwells, that is, with the invisible Church. Accordingly, he who restricts salvation to fellowship with any visible Church therewith overthrows the article of the justification of a poor sinner in the sight of God by faith alone in Jesus Christ; although this also is true, that outside of the visible Church there is no salvation if *by visible Church* is understood *not any particular church but the gathering of all those who have been called*. For outside of the group of those who have been called we are not to look for any

elect, since without the Word of God, which is only among the group of those who have been called, there is no faith, hence neither Christ nor salvation. "For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How, then, shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? . . . So, then, faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God," Rom. 10:13, 14, 17.

#### 4. The Theses on the Ministry, with the Scripture-Proof

##### THESIS I

*The holy ministry, or the pastoral office, is an office distinct from the priestly office, which belongs to all believers.*

##### Proof from the Word of God

Although Holy Scripture testifies to us that all believing Christians are priests (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10), nevertheless at the same time it teaches us explicitly that there is in the Church an office for teaching, shepherding, governing, etc., which does not belong to Christians by reason of their general Christian calling. For thus it is written: "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? *Are all teachers?*" 1 Cor. 12:29. "How shall they preach except they be sent?" Rom. 10:15. "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation," Jas. 3:1. [Luther: "Unterwinde sich nicht jedermann, Lehrer zu sein."]

##### THESIS II

*The ministry, or the pastoral office, is not a human ordinance, but an office established by God Himself.*

##### Proof from the Word of God

That the holy ministry, or the ministry of the New Testament, is not a human ordinance, not an institution established by the Church, but a work of *divine* wisdom, an establishment of *God Himself*, appears

1) From the Old Testament *prophecies* to the effect that God Himself would give to the Church of the New Covenant shepherds and teachers: "*The Lord gave the*

Word; great was the company of those that published it," Ps. 68:11. "I will give you pastors according to Mine heart which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding," Jer. 3:15. "Be glad, then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord, your God, [who giveth you teachers unto righteousness." This clause in Luther's translation has been dropped from the English version and is referred to only in the margin], Joel 2:23.

2) The divine institution of the ministry of the New Testament appears *from the call of the holy apostles to the ministry of teaching by the Son of God*, as recorded Matt. 10; 28:18-20; Luke 9:1-10; Mark 16:15; John 20:21-23; 21:15-17 ("Feed My sheep"), and of the seventy disciples, as recorded Luke 10:1-22.

3) Finally, the divine origin of the ministry of the Gospel in the Church appears from all those passages in which also *those who have been medietely called are represented as having been called by God*: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood," Acts 20:28. "And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?" 1 Cor. 12:28, 29. "And He [Christ] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers," Eph. 4:11.

4) Accordingly, the holy apostles coordinate themselves with the ministers of the Church who were called medietely as with their colleagues in office: "The elders which are among you I exhort, *who am also an elder*," 1 Pet. 5:1. Compare 2 John 1; 3 John 1, where John calls himself a *presbyter*, or *elder*; again, Col. 4:7, where Paul calls Tychicus "*fellow-servant*"; again, Phil. 2:25, where Paul calls Epaphroditus his "*companion in labor and fellow-soldier*"; finally, 1 Cor. 4:1; 1:1, where Paul calls himself and Sosthenes "*ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God*."

## THESIS III

*The ministry of preaching is not an arbitrary office, but its character is such that the Church has been commanded to establish it and is ordinarily bound to it till the end of days.*

**Proof from the Word of God**

Thus speaks the Lord, Matt. 28:19, 20: "Go ye and teach all nations," etc., "teaching them to observe *all things whatsoever* I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you *always, even unto the end of the world.*" From this it is evident that by the command of Christ the apostles' ministry of preaching was to endure to the end of days. Now, if this is to be the case, the Church must continually to the end of days establish the orderly public ministry of preaching and in this ordinance administer to its members the means of grace.

## THESIS IV

*The ministry of preaching is not a peculiar order, set up over and against the common estate of Christians, and holier than the latter, like the priesthood of the Levites, but it is an office of service.*

**Proof from the Word of God**

According to God's Word all believing Christians — and only these — are priests (of priestly estate). Compare 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6. There is no difference of order among them; they are "all one in Christ Jesus," Gal. 3:28; they are all brethren," Matt. 23:8-12. However, as in the Old Covenant *all* sons of Aaron were indeed of priestly descent and *order*, while only *some* were engaged in the priestly *office* and ministered, so in the New Covenant also those who are in charge of the public ministry of preaching are not priests on that account or priests before others, but they are only the ministering persons among a priestly people. Therefore the holy apostle writes: "Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but *ministers* by whom ye believed?" 1 Cor. 3:5. Again: "We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus, the Lord, and ourselves *your servants*

for Jesus' sake," 2 Cor. 4:5. Again: "For His body's sake, which is *the Church, whereof I am a minister* according to the dispensation of God which is given me for you to fulfil the Word of God," Col. 1:24, 25.

#### THESIS V

*The ministry of preaching has the authority to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments and the authority of a spiritual tribunal.*

#### Proof from the Word of God

The Lord shows clearly and plainly of what sort is the authority of the ministry of preaching which was established by Christ together with the apostles' office when He says: "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," Matt. 28:19, 20. Again: "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. . . . Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained," John 20:21, 23. Again: "Feed My lambs. . . . Feed My sheep," John 21:15, 16. This, then, is the authority indicated in the above thesis. Accordingly, the holy apostle writes: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God," 1 Cor. 4:1.

#### THESIS VI

*The ministry of preaching is conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of all church power, or of the keys, and by its call, as prescribed by God. The ordination of those called, with the laying on of hands, is not by divine institution but is an apostolic church ordinance and merely a public, solemn confirmation of the call.*

*A. The ministry of preaching is conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of all church power, or of the keys, and by its call, as prescribed by God.*

#### Proof from the Word of God

*Inasmuch as the congregation, or church, of Christ, that is, the assembly of believers, possesses the keys and the priestly office immediately, Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Pet.*



2:5-10 (compare what was stated above, under Thesis IV, on the Church), *it is likewise the congregation*—and it can be only the congregation—by which, namely, by its election, call, and commission, *the ministry of preaching, which publicly administers the office of the keys and all priestly offices in the congregation, is conferred* on certain persons qualified for the same. Accordingly we read that even the Apostle Matthias was not elected to his exalted office only by the eleven apostles but by the entire gathering of the assembled believers, about a hundred and twenty of whom were present, Acts 1:15-26.

Again, we read that also the deacons were elected by "the whole multitude," Acts 6:1-6.

If the congregation calling has among its members also pastors in active service, naturally these, too, and—by reason of the office which they already hold in the Church—these *before all*, belong to the parties issuing the call, so much so that, when the cooperation in this act due to their office is denied them, the call of "the multitude" in such a case has no validity, for the plain reason that it is issued in that case *not by the congregation but by individuals in the congregation*, which, when properly constituted, consists of preachers and hearers. However, if no persons already in office belong to the congregation issuing the call, the call of the multitude is indeed valid also without the cooperation of the former. But the following points require consideration: 1. love and unity, which according to the will of Christ is to exist among, and be manifested by, all members of His body; 2. the honor which believers owe to faithful incumbents of the office; 3. the sanctity and importance of the matter itself. For these reasons also an isolated congregation should not act in this matter solely according to its own understanding, but if it *can* secure the aid of ministers of the Church already in office, it should surely invite them, avail itself of their counsel and instruction in this matter, and, in particular, leave to them the examination and the proper, public, and solemn installation of the person it has called. The model for all this, to be patterned after by the Church to the end of time, is presented to us in Acts 6:1-6.

*B. The ordination of those called, with the laying on of hands, is not by divine institution but is an apostolical church ordinance and merely a public, solemn confirmation of the call.*

#### Proof from the Word of God

Whatever cannot be proved by God's Word as having been instituted by God cannot without idolatry be declared to be, and accepted as, an establishment of God Himself. Now, Scripture is silent regarding a divine institution of ordination; it merely testifies that the apostles made use of it and that at that time the communication of glorious gifts was connected with the laying on of hands. However, according to the Word of God there is indeed no question but that even now ordination, when it is joined with a *prayer of the church*, based on the glorious promises that have been specially given to the ministry of preaching, is not an empty ceremony but is accompanied by an outpouring of heavenly gifts on the person ordained.

#### THESIS VII

*The holy ministry is the authority conferred by God through the congregation, as holder of the priesthood and of all church power, to administer in public office the common rights of the spiritual priesthood in behalf of all.*

#### Proof from the Word of God

It was shown from the Word of God in Theses I—IV that the *spiritual priesthood* which all truly believing Christians possess, and the *holy ministry, or the pastoral office*, are not identical; that neither is an ordinary Christian a pastor for the reason that he is a spiritual priest, nor is a pastor a priest for the reason that he holds the public office of a preacher; that neither is the *spiritual priesthood* a public office in the Church, nor is the *public ministry* an order different from that of Christians; but it is a *ministry of service* (however, ordained by Christ Himself when He established the apostolic office).

It was shown, furthermore, in Thesis V that ministers discharge publicly, in behalf of all, the very offices which

the Church, as the real royal, priestly race, and therefore every truly believing *Christian*, possesses originally.

Lastly, it was shown in Thesis VI that ministers have their office and their authority conferred on them by God *through the congregation*, as the original possessor of these, and by the *call* which the congregation, according to the will of God, has issued to them.

In the light of all this evidence, *the ministry*, as to its essence, cannot be anything else than the authority conferred by God through the congregation, as the possessor of the priesthood and of all church power, to exercise in the public office, in behalf of all, the common rights of the spiritual priesthood.

The proof for this from the Word of God has already been presented under Theses IV and VII, on the Church, and Theses I, IV, V, and VI, on the Ministry.

A reminder may be in place here that Holy Scripture exhibits to us the Church, that is, the believers, as the bride of the Lord and the mistress of His house, to whom have been committed the keys and therewith the right and the access to all courts, sanctuaries, and treasures of the house of God and the authority to appoint stewards over it; furthermore, that every true Christian, according to Holy Scripture, is a spiritual priest and hence is entitled and called not only to use the means of grace for himself but also to dispense them to those who as yet have them not and hence do not as yet possess like priestly rights with himself. Scripture, however, teaches that, where all possess these rights, no one may arrogate these rights as inhering in him exclusively; but wherever Christians dwell together in a community, the priestly rights of all are to be administered publicly in the common interest only by those who have been called by the communion in the manner prescribed by God.

The incumbents, then, of the ministerial office in the Church are for this reason also called in God's Word not only servants and stewards of God, but also servants and stewards of the *church*, or *congregation*, and are thus represented as persons who administer, *not their own*, but the rights, authorities, possessions, treasures, and offices of *the Church*, hence are acting, not only in the name of

Christ, but also in the name and in the place of His bride, the Church of the believers.

True, Christ Himself has established in His Church the ordinance of the public ministry of preaching and has defined the rights and authorities which it is to have. But these are not rights and authorities which the incumbents of the office are to possess *to the exclusion of the Church* but the rights and authorities which Christ, together with the keys, has given to His Church for its own. However, *by His express command and will* (compare Theses II and III, on the Ministry) these are to be publicly administered in the Church, *not by the multitude promiscuously* but by distinct men qualified for it and equipped with the necessary gifts, who by these gifts are *bequeathed to the Church and appointed by the Lord Himself* and are hence *to be called and actually are called*. Hence, although the universal spiritual priesthood and the public ministry of preaching are not identical, the latter nevertheless is the fruit of the former, because, as our fathers put it, it "has its roots" in the former. Notwithstanding this, the incumbent of the ministry of the Church does not thereby become a priest (he is rather to be chosen from the royal priests, the Christians), still he administers the holy offices of the priest-Christians. Accordingly, the holy apostle writes concerning himself: "I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God that *the offering up* of the Gentiles might be acceptable," Rom. 15:16. (The English version differs from Luther's.)

#### THESIS VIII

*The ministry is the highest office in the Church, from which, as its stem, all other offices of the Church issue.*

#### Proof from the Word of God

Since the incumbents of the public ministry have in their public office, for the sake of the common interests of their congregations, John 20:21-23, the administration of the *keys* of the kingdom of heaven, which the Church possesses originally and immediately, Matt. 16:19; 18:18, their office must necessarily be the highest office in the Church, and from it, as from the stem, all other offices

must issue, inasmuch as the keys embrace the entire authority of the Church. In accordance with this the incumbents of this office are in the Holy Scriptures called elders, bishops, rulers, stewards, etc.; and the incumbents of an inferior office are called deacons, that is, servants, not only of God, but also of the congregation and of the *bishop*; and it is stated regarding the latter in particular that they must care for the congregation and must watch over all souls, as those that must render an account for them, 1 Tim. 3:1, 5, 7; 5:17; 1 Cor. 4:1; Titus 1:7; Heb. 13:17. We see from this that the holy apostles in the beginning discharged, together with their ministry of preaching, also the office of deacons in Jerusalem until the growth of the congregation required that for their relief this latter office be assigned to special persons, Acts 6:1-6. For with the apostolate the Lord has established in the Church only one office, which embraces all offices of the Church and by which the congregation of God is to be provided for in every respect. The highest office is the ministry of preaching, with which all other offices are simultaneously conferred. Therefore every other public office in the Church is merely a part of the office of the ministry, or an auxiliary office, which is attached to the ministry of preaching, whether it be the eldership of such as do not labor in the Word and doctrine, 1 Tim. 1:15, or that of rulers, Rom. 12:8, or the diaconate (ministry of service in the narrower sense) or the administration of whatever office in the Church may be assigned to particular persons. Accordingly, the offices of school-teachers who have to teach the Word of God in their schools, of almoners, of sextons, of precentors in public worship, etc., are all to be regarded as sacred offices of the Church, which exercise a part of the one office of the Church and are aids to the ministry of preaching.

#### THESIS IX

*Reverence and unconditional obedience is due to the ministry of preaching when the preacher is ministering the Word of God. However, the preacher may not dominate over the Church; he has, accordingly, no right to make new laws, to arrange indifferent matters and cere-*

*monies arbitrarily, and to impose and execute excommunication ALONE, without a previous verdict of the entire congregation.*

*A. Reverence and unconditional obedience is due to the ministry of preaching when the preacher is ministering the Word of God.*

#### Proof from the Word of God

Although the incumbents of the public ministry do not form a more holy order, distinct from the ordinary order of Christians, but merely exercise the universal rights of Christians, with the public and orderly administration of which they have been commissioned, still they are *not servants of men* on that account. The principal efficient cause of the ordinance of the public office of preaching is God, the Most High, Himself. This ordinance is not an arrangement which men in their wisdom have instituted for propriety's sake and for salutary reasons, but it is an institution of the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Therefore, when official authority has been conferred on a person by the congregation by means of a regular, legitimate call, that person has been placed over the congregation *by God Himself*, although it was done *through* the congregation, 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11; Acts 20:28. The person installed is henceforth not only a servant of the congregation but at the same time a servant of God, *an ambassador in Christ's stead*, by whom God exhorts the congregation, 1 Cor. 4:1; 2 Cor. 5:18-20. Accordingly, when a preacher is ministering God's Word in his congregation, whether he be teaching or admonishing, reproving or comforting, publicly or privately, the congregation hears from his mouth Jesus Christ Himself and owes him unconditional obedience as to a person by whom God wants to make known His will to them and guide them to eternal life. The more faithfully the preacher discharges his office, the greater must be the reverence of which the congregation deems him worthy. Nor has the congregation any right to take away his office from such a faithful servant of Jesus Christ; if it does this, the congregation therewith thrusts aside Jesus Christ Himself, in whose name their preacher ruled

over them. A congregation can remove an incumbent from office only when it is evident from God's Word that God Himself has removed him as a wolf or a hireling. Accordingly, we are told in the Scriptures:

"He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me," Luke 10:16.

"Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you," Heb. 13:17.

"We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves," 1 Thess. 5:12, 13.

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the Word and doctrine. For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses," 1 Tim. 5:17-19. Compare Gal. 6:6-10.

"And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment than for that city," Matt. 10:12-15.

*B. The preacher may not dominate over the Church; he has accordingly no right to make new laws and to arrange indifferent matters and ceremonies arbitrarily.*

#### Proof from the Word of God

Thus speaks the Lord to his disciples: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you," Matt. 20:25, 26. "Be not

ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; *and all ye are brethren,*" Matt. 23:8.

Again, the Lord testifies before Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight," John 18:36.

We see from this that the Church of Jesus Christ is not a dominion of such as command and such as obey, but it is one great, holy brotherhood in which no one can dominate and exercise force. Now, this necessary equality among Christians is not abolished by the obedience which they render to the preachers when these confront them with the Word of Jesus Christ; for in this case, in obeying the preachers, they do not obey men but Christ Himself. Just as certainly, however, this equality of believers would be abolished and the Church would be changed into a secular state if a preacher would demand obedience also when he presents to the Christians, not the Word of Christ, who is his and all Christians' Lord and Head, but something which by virtue of his own understanding and experience he considers good and appropriate. *Hence the moment there is a discussion in the Church about matters indifferent, that is, such as are neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word, the preacher may never demand unconditional obedience for something which appears best just to him. In such a case it is rather the business of the entire congregation, of the preacher together with the hearers, to decide the question whether what has been proposed should be accepted or rejected. It is, however, due the preacher, by reason of his office of teacher, overseer, and watchman, to guide the deliberations that have to be instituted, to instruct the congregation regarding the matter, to see to it that in settling indifferent matters and arranging order and ceremonies of the church nothing is done in a trifling manner and nothing harmful is adopted.*

For this reason the holy apostles write: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder. . . . Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind; *neither as being lords*



over God's heritage but being ensamples to the flock," 1 Pet. 5:1-3.

"I speak not by commandment but by occasion of the forwardness of others and to prove the sincerity of your love, 2 Cor. 8:8. Paul had asked the Corinthians previously for a contribution to the poor.

"This I speak for your own profit; *not that I may cast a snare upon you*, but for that which is comely and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction," 1 Cor. 7:35. Paul had previously recommended to the Corinthians the celibate life during the time of persecution.

When the holy apostles, notwithstanding these statements, among other things write this: "The rest will I set in order when I come," 1 Cor. 11:34, it is evident from the foregoing that they made arrangements in regard to indifferent matters not by way of commands but by offering their advice and with *the consent of the entire congregation*.

C. *The preacher has no right to impose and execute excommunication ALONE, without a previous verdict of the entire congregation.*

### Proof from the Word of God

It is certain, on the one hand, that to the incumbent of the public ministry is committed also the power of the keys in the narrower sense, namely, the power publicly to loose and to bind. But, on the other hand, it cannot be in the power of the preacher alone, without a previous verdict of the congregation, to exclude a sinner from it; for then the Christian congregation would, besides, have to render blind obedience to the preacher even in matters pertaining to a person's salvation. For in such an instance the question is not concerning a clear *teaching* of the divine Word but concerning a *verdict* on the condition of a person's soul, and, at that, a verdict of such a nature that to a certain person heaven is closed and he is forbidden brotherly fellowship with Christians and they with him. Therefore, while according to the Word of the Lord and His sacred ordinance the public execution of excommunication belongs to, and must remain with, the incumbent of the public ministry, nevertheless, according to the express prescription and order of the same

Lord, the investigation preceding the execution of excommunication and the final judicial verdict must come from the entire congregation, that is, from the teachers *and hearers*. For thus it is written: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him *alone*. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee *one or two more* that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the *church*; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an *heathen man and a publican*. Verily I say unto you, *Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven*; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. *For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them,*" Matt. 18:15-20.

Evidently here Christ, as our Confessions put it, gives the highest jurisdiction to the church, or congregation, and wants a sinner in a congregation to be regarded as an heathen man and a publican, and the awful judgment of excommunication to be executed upon him, only after several fruitless private admonitions and after he has been admonished in vain also *publicly*, in the presence of, and by, the whole congregation, and therefore his *expulsion* from their fellowship has been *unanimously resolved* upon by them and has been executed by the preacher of the congregation.

In accordance with this procedure, then, even Paul would not excommunicate the incestuous person at Corinth without the congregation, but, spite of his having declared this great sinner worthy of excommunication, he wrote the congregation that this must be done by them "*when they were gathered together,*" 1 Cor. 5:4.

John, too, in his Third Epistle, vv. 9, 10, severely reproves the bishop Diotrephes, who had arrogated to himself a supreme position (φιλοπρωτεύων) in the congregation and arbitrarily, without the congregation, expelled

from it sincere Christians who may have opposed his domineering.

Now, it will go without saying that what the *congregation* through "*many*" and "*before all*" (2 Cor. 2:6; 1 Tim. 5:20) did at the time of the apostles can be validly and legitimately done also where the ruling congregation is represented by a presbytery or consistory, composed of clergymen and laymen, so that the presbytery or consistory alone renders the verdict of excommunication, provided only that this is done with the knowledge and consent of the people.

#### THESIS X

*According to divine right the function of passing judgment on doctrine belongs indeed to the ministry of preaching. However, also the laymen have this right, and for this reason they also have a seat and vote with the preachers in church courts and councils.*

#### Proof from the Word of God

No proof is needed that the function of passing judgment on doctrine belongs to the public ministry of preaching; for without this function they could not at all discharge their office. However, there is irrefutable evidence in God's Word that by the establishment of the special office for passing judgment on doctrine this right has not by any means been taken away from laymen, but the exercise of it has been made their most sacred duty.

This is proved, *first*, by all those passages of Holy Scripture in which this judging is *enjoined* also upon ordinary Christians. For instance, thus writes the holy Apostle Paul: "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" etc., 1 Cor. 10:15, 16. Again: "Try the spirits whether they are of God," 1 John 4:1. Compare 2 John 10:11; 1 Thess. 5:21.

The proof is furnished, furthermore, by all those passages in which Christians are exhorted to *beware of false prophets*, such as Matt. 7:15, 16; John 10:5, and in such passages in which they are *praised* for their zeal in testing doctrine, for instance, when we are told regarding the Bereans: "These were more noble than those in Thessa-

lonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so," Acts 17:11.

Lastly, we have an account in the Acts of the Apostles stating that *at the first apostolic council laymen were not only present but also spoke, and that the decisions reached on this occasion were made by them as well as by the apostles and elders and were sent in their name as well as that of the apostles.* Hence there is no doubt that laymen have a seat and voice in church judicatories and at synods with the public ministers of the Church.

W. H. T. D.

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### **"The Proper Form of an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation Independent of the State"**

Dr. Walther's second classic on the doctrine of the Church, *Die rechte Gestalt einer vom Staate unabhaengigen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Ortsgemeinde*,<sup>1)</sup> describes *the ideal Christian congregation*. The ideal Christian congregation is, first of all, such a one as is described in § 1, one which adheres to the pure doctrine. The Christian congregation which rejects portions of the Scripture truth has constituted itself on an unnatural, unlawful basis. It has assumed a form which God does not sanction. The Lord requires all His churches to preach His Word in its purity—according to the Confessions of the Lutheran Church. The ideal Christian congregation, furthermore, keeps itself independent of the State (§ 2). The church which permits the State to regulate its internal affairs is in an abnormal condition. The church thrives best under the separation of Church and State. Finally, that is the ideal Christian congregation—and the ideal Lutheran congregation—which fully understands its rights and duties and employs such methods, organs, and forms as best serve the proper exercise of its rights and the proper performance of its duties. Paragraphs 3 to 66 present a fine morphology of congregational life and work.

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1) Submitted at the session of the Western District in 1862 and published in 1863.

Who originated the ideas back of this *Proper Form* of a Lutheran congregation? Not Walther. The original is found in Luther, and Luther found the principles in Scripture. Why, the very title of Walther's book was suggested by Luther. "In dieser Historie seht ihr erstlich, wie eine christliche Gemeinde soll gestaltet sein." (St. Louis Ed., 11:2065. Sermon on the Gospel for St. Stephen's Day.) Luther knew very well what form a Christian congregation should have. A study of the writings of the fathers of the Lutheran Church "shows that, even though the Lutheran Church existed in those days as a State Church, these men, guided by their doctrine of the Church, the Ministry, Church Government, etc., conceived of exactly such a form of a local church independent of the State as is presented in this book." (Preface, p. IV.) The full application of their idea was a new thing in the Lutheran Church, but Luther himself had advocated the more important forms and succeeded in introducing a number of them. He charted the course which was eventually followed. How much of Walther's *Proper Form* is out of date? Very little. Those forms which are directly called for by Scripture are never out of date. Those that come under the head of adiaphora are subject to change. The Christian congregation adjusts these matters to fit changed conditions. But it so happens that present conditions call for hardly any change in Walther's plan. He was a wise builder. Do not be hasty in changing his specifications. The old model is not antiquated. If you want to build an ideal congregation, stick as closely as possible to the *Proper Form*.

Here are the 66 propositions of *Die rechte Gestalt*<sup>2)</sup> with the Scripture references and as many citations from the Lutheran Confessions and from the Lutheran theologians as our limited space will hold.<sup>3)</sup>

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2) A fine translation appeared in the *Theological Quarterly*, I, 401 ff.)

3) Walther here draws upon 46 Lutheran writers, many of them named in the list on page 54. Among those not found there are: B. Carpzov, Chytraeus, Jonas, Lassenius, Loescher, Mathesius, H. Mueller, Porta, Quistorp, Scriver, Tarnov.

## PRELIMINARY REMARKS

§ 1. *An Evangelical Lutheran local congregation is a gathering of believing Christians at a definite place, among whom the Word of God is preached in its purity according to the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the holy Sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution as recorded in the Gospel, in whose society, however, false Christians and hypocrites will always, and manifest sinners may sometimes, be found.*

Scripture and the Augsburg Confession declare that the pure Word and the unadulterated Sacraments are the marks of a true congregation, or church. "The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered." (A. C., Art. VII.) "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed," John 8:31. Cp. John 10:27; 14:23.

Any church and every church which adheres in its teaching to the Lutheran Confessions is a Lutheran church. "All who believe and live according to the doctrine of the [Augsburg] Confession and the Apology are by virtue of this faith and doctrine our brethren, and their perils concern us as much as our own. Neither dare we forsake them, for they are members of the true Church, no matter when they join us, whether they do that secretly or openly or whether they live among us or in foreign parts." (Luther, 16:1538.) It does not matter whether their form of church government and the ceremonies observed by them are the same as ours. It is not "necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies instituted by men, should be everywhere alike." (A. C., VII. Cp. Luther, 19:1026: "Wear three gowns.") It may even be that they have not as yet, for certain reasons, adopted the name Lutheran. "If they only preach the doctrine of Christ and His apostles" (Luther, 21b:1913 f.), they are true Lutherans. The mere official declaration of a body that it acknowledges the Lutheran Confessions does not, of course, make it Lutheran; its status is determined "by what is publicly witnessed, preached, and practised in its midst." (Luther, 16:2275.) — As to "the many hypocrites and evil

persons" who are "in this life mingled with the Church" (A. C., VIII), "they are indeed in that body, in which the Church is, but not in reality in that body, *which* is the Church." (A. Calov.) They are not members of the invisible Church nor in reality members of the visible Christian congregation.

§ 2. *A congregation is independent of the State when the State leaves it to such congregation in all things to govern itself.*

The separation of Church and State is not an irregularity but the normal, sound condition. "For civil government deals with other things than does the Gospel. Therefore the power of the Church and the civil power must not be confounded." (A. C., XXVIII.) "My kingdom is not of this world," John 18:36; Matt. 22:21; John 18:37; Luke 12:13, 14; 2 Cor. 10:4; Rom. 13:1 ff. Luther: "When the princes take it upon themselves to rule the Church, they must not look for God's blessing, and the last will be worse than the first. Let them concern themselves about their court and leave the Church to those who are called to that work and must give account to God for it. . . . Under the Papacy, Satan mixed the Church into the secular government; in our days he wants to mix the secular government into the Church. But with the help of God we shall resist him with all our power and make it our business to keep the offices separate." (21b: 2911.) When Luther noticed the trend in the consistories towards going beyond their legitimate functions and giving the civil government as such a voice in the government of the Church, Luther declared: "We must break up the consistory, for we will not have the jurists and the Pope in it; that's final." (Walch Ed., 22:2210.)

§ 3. *In order to learn what constitutes the proper form of an Evangelical Lutheran congregation independent of the State, it is necessary to ascertain from the Word of God chiefly two things: first, wherein its rights and duties, and secondly, wherein the proper exercise of such rights and duties, consist.*

## CHAPTER I

**Of the Rights of an Evangelical Lutheran Local Church  
Independent of the State**

§ 4. *All the rights which an Evangelical Lutheran local congregation possesses are included in the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which the Lord has originally and immediately given to His entire Church, and in such manner that they belong to each congregation, the smallest as well as the largest, in like measure, Matt. 18:17-20 ("Tell it unto the church. . . . Whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"); 16:19; John 20:22, 23.*

"Scripture clearly identifies the ecclesiastical power and the keys." (Melancthon, *Corp. Ref.*, 12:494.) And these "keys belong not to the person of one particular man but to the Church. Christ grants the keys principally and immediately to the Church and not merely to certain persons. Matt. 18:20: 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name,' etc." (Smalcald Art., Tract, §§ 24, 69.) Luther: "The Christian Church alone has the keys; let there be no doubt about this. And whoever, in spite of this, arrogates the keys to himself, be he Pope or anybody else, is an arrant sacrilegus, a church-robber." (19:846.) "Here [Matt. 18:19, 20] we learn that also two or three gathered together in the name of Christ have exactly the same power as St. Peter and all the apostles. Even though all of them were but stable-boys, what does Christ care about high and mighty lords?" (17:1074.) The congregation does not get its power from the ministry but the ministry from the congregation. "The minister is a servant of the whole congregation, to which the keys are given, though he himself be a scoundrel. For what he does in the name and stead of the congregation the Church does." (11:2304.) Nor does the local church derive its authority and rights from the Church at large. It is not dependent on any superchurch, any larger church-body, any other congregation. "We know that in Christendom all churches are equal. And the bishops, or pastors, are equal, no one the lord or servant of the other." (17:1115.) "The congregation of God of every place and every time" is a sovereign body. (Form. of Conc., Th. Decl., X, § 9.)



§ 5. *Additional Scripture-proof for the teaching that with the keys of the kingdom of heaven every Evangelical Lutheran local congregation has the entire church power which it needs, that is, the power and authority to perform everything that is requisite for its government: the true members of such congregation, viz., the believing Christians therein contained, are called "priests and kings before God," or "the royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6), "anointed" (1 John 2:20, 27), Christ's affianced bride (2 Cor. 11:2), "the body of Christ," in and among whom Christ dwells (1 Cor. 12:27; Matt. 18:20); they are described as equal brethren (Matt. 23:8-11), as the possessors of all things (1 Cor. 3:21-23: "All things are yours"). Furthermore, the ministers are called their "stewards" and "servants" (1 Cor. 4:1; 2 Cor. 4:5). Finally, the congregation itself is represented as the supreme tribunal (Matt. 18:15-18: "Tell it unto the church").*

Luther: "The keys are given neither to Peter nor to his successor but to the Church alone, from which he receives them as a servant." (18:737.) "The Holy Ghost was careful not to use the name sacerdos, priest, for the apostles or any other offices. It is the name reserved for the baptized, the Christians. For none of us is born in Holy Baptism an apostle, preacher, teacher, pastor, but we are all born priests. Out of the number of these born priests some are then chosen and elected to these offices, which they administer in the name of all of us." (19:1260.) Smalc. Art.: "Christ gives supreme and final jurisdiction to the Church when He says: 'Tell it unto the church.'" (Tract, § 24.)

## CHAPTER II

### Of the Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Local Church Independent of the State

§ 6. *It is the duty of the congregation carefully to see to it that the Word of God may richly dwell and have full and free scope in its midst. Col. 3:16: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly," etc.*

Smalc. A.: "Wherever the Church is, there is the authority [command] to administer the Gospel." (Tract, § 67.) Apology: "The true adornment of the churches is

godly, useful, and clear doctrine, the devout use of the Sacraments, ardent prayer, and the like." (XXIV, § 51.) Luther: "God's Word cannot be without God's people. On the other hand, God's people cannot be without God's Word." (16:2276.)

§ 7. *It is the duty of the congregation to care for the purity of doctrine and life in its midst and to exercise church discipline in these matters.* Matt. 18:15-18: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, . . . let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Rom. 16:17: "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them." 1 Cor. 5:1-13: "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? . . . Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." 1 Cor. 6:1-8; 2 Cor. 2:6-11. Gal. 6:1: "restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14, 15. 2 John 10, 11: "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed," etc.

Smalc. A.: "When the true judgment of the Church is removed, godless dogmas and godless services cannot be removed. . . . The Christians must censure all other errors of the Pope." (Tract, §§ 51, 56.) Luther: "The right to judge, and pronounce on, matters of doctrine belongs to each and every Christian, so much so that he is doing an accursed thing who impairs this right by a hair's breadth. . . . Christ gives them this right. Moreover, He commands them to judge the doctrine." (19:341.)

"What is the reason that the ban [church discipline, excommunication] has in these days fallen into disuse? This, that no one is willing to do his Christian duty in this matter. . . . The neighbor might have been won back if you had only performed your duty and obligation by admonishing him." (Luther, 6:1633.)

§ 8. *It is the duty of the congregation to concern itself also with the temporal welfare of all its members that they may not suffer want of the necessities of life nor be forsaken in any need.* Gal. 6:10: "Let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household

of faith." Deut. 15:4. Rom. 12:13: "Distributing to the necessity of saints." Gal. 2:9, 10; Jas. 1:27; 1 Thess. 4:11, 12.

Luther: "In this story you see what form a Christian congregation should have. . . . The apostles take care of the souls, occupy themselves with preaching and praying, and yet they also provide for the needs of the body, appoint men to distribute the goods, so that no one suffers want. . . . We should form our congregations after this model, provide for preaching, but also for the distribution of goods, the visiting of the sick, so that no one suffers want. . . . But we have not as yet the people for that." (11:2065.) "After the preaching of the Gospel the office and charge of a true and faithful pastor is to be mindful of the poor. . . . There is none that will now care for the maintenance of the ministers and the erecting of schools. . . . To be brief, true religion is ever in need. Therefore a true and faithful bishop must have a care of the poor also so that they suffer no need." (On Gal. 2:10.)

§ 9. *It is the duty of the congregation to see that in its midst "all things be done decently and in order," 1 Cor. 14:33, 40, and to "provide for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of men," 2 Cor. 8:21. Col. 2:5.*

"It is lawful for bishops, or pastors, to make ordinances that things be done orderly in the Church" (A. C., XXVIII:53), the pastors acting "as servants and stewards, not as masters, of the Church" (Luther, 16:1014), the power to make such ordinances "as may be most useful and edifying" lying with "the congregation of God of every place" (F. C., Ep. X, § 4).

§ 10. *It is the duty of the congregation to be diligent "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" also with all parts of the orthodox Church, Eph. 4:3; 1 Thess. 4:9, 10; Rom. 15:26, 27; 2 Cor. 8:19.*

Luther: "It is a fine thing that the churches be in accord also regarding external matters as they agree in the Spirit, faith, Word, and Sacrament. St. Paul earnestly admonishes us to strive after, and maintain, concord and harmony in doctrine and life and keep from dissension and inconformity, Rom. 12:16; 1 Cor. 1:10." (20:1790 f.)

§ 11. *It is also incumbent upon the congregation to do its part in building up and promoting the welfare of the Church at large. Amos 6:6; Acts 11:21-23 ("Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch," etc.); 15:1 ff.*

Luther: "Mark 16:16: 'He that believeth and is baptized' shows that faith must not remain concealed and hidden; it will not do for each one hearing the Gospel to go his own way, to believe for himself, and not to confess his faith before others. No, it should be known and seen where the Gospel is not only preached but also believed and received, that is, where the Church and Christ's kingdom is to be found in the world; for that purpose Christ brings us together and holds us together through this divine sign of Baptism. Otherwise, if we remained apart and separate without such an external bond and sign, Christendom could not be extended and preserved. Therefore Christ binds us together in this divine community in order that the Gospel be spread farther and farther and others be brought into the fold through our confession." (11:982 f.) — D. Arcularius: "It belongs to the solidarity of the congregations that one come to the aid of the other, as often as need arises, through mutual instruction, admonition, consolation, and whatever other assistance our Christian duty calls for, after the example of the churches at Jerusalem and Antioch, Acts 11:21-23."

### CHAPTER III

## Of the Performance of the Rights and Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Local Church Independent of the State

### A. Of the Meetings of the Congregation

§ 12. *In order that a free local congregation may execute its rights and privileges in a conscientious, profitable, and God-pleasing manner, it is necessary to have public meetings, properly arranged and conducted, for the purpose of transacting its business as a self-governing body. Matt. 18:17: "Tell it unto the church." 1 Cor. 5:4: "When ye are gathered together." Acts 21:17-22: "The multitude must needs come together." Chap. 6:2; 15:30; 1 Tim. 5:20.*

Luther calls such meetings "useful councils" (16:2261). It would be "a truly evangelical church order for those who mean to be real Christians to record their names on a list and meet at an appointed place" for the purpose of exercising discipline, caring for the poor, and performing other Christian work. "If one had the people and persons, the rules and regulations could easily be supplied. But as yet I neither can nor would make rules and regulations for such a congregation or assembly. For I do not yet have the persons needed for this." (*The German Mass and Order of Service*, 10:226.)

§ 13. *All the adult male members of the congregation are entitled to active participation in the transactions of such meetings by way of speaking, deliberating, voting, and resolving. Matt. 18:17, 18; Acts 1:15, 23-26; 15:5, 12, 13, 22, 23: "It so pleased the apostles and elders with THE WHOLE CHURCH. . . . The apostles and elders and BRETHREN." 1 Cor. 5:2; 6:2; 10:15; 12:7; 2 Thess. 3:15. But women and the young are excluded from such participation. 1 Cor. 14:34, 35: "Let your women keep silence in the churches." 1 Pet. 5:5.*

§ 14. *The external management of the meetings rests with those who in general supervise the congregation or to whom the external government of the congregation has been entrusted as a special office. Acts 15:6 ("The apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter"); 1 Tim. 5:17; Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28.*

The various church offices stem from the one office instituted by God, the ministry. For instance, "the deacons (almoners) and elders, caring for the discipline, perform work with which the ministry is charged. . . . God has left it to the congregations to establish such separate offices and define their particular work as the need arises and the circumstances require." (M. Chemnitz, *Examen*, II, 13.)

§ 15. *Subjects of deliberation and action in such meetings are matters of doctrine (Acts 15), election or appointment of church officers (Acts 1:15-26; 6:1-6; 2 Cor. 8:19); church discipline (Matt. 18:17-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 2 Cor. 2:*

6-11; 1 Tim. 5:20), public offenses (Acts 21:20-22), quarrels among members (1 Cor. 6:1-8), matters of good order and ceremonial (1 Cor. 14:26-40; 16:1, 2), and the like.

§ 16. *In matters of doctrine and conscience there must be unanimity, all giving assent to the teaching of God's Word (Is. 8:20: "To the Law and to the Testimony") and to the Confessions of the Church. Adiaphora (MITTEL-DINGE), matters neither commanded nor prohibited by God's Word, are ordered according to the principles of love and equity; after the matter has been fully and orderly discussed, it is decided by a majority vote (1 Cor. 16:14: "Let all your things be done with charity"; 14:40: "Let all things be done decently and in order"; Col. 2:5). — In case anything should have been decided and determined by the congregation contrary to the Word of God, such decision is null and void, must be so declared, and revoked.*

Holy Scripture "is the only true standard by which all teachers and doctrines are to be judged." In the Confessions of the Church "we have a unanimously accepted, definite, common form of doctrine." (F. C., Thor. Decl.; cp. Summary, §§ 3, 9, 10.) — Christians come to an agreement on the adiaphora "in Christian liberty and guided by love, having the best interests of the community in mind. To do such things out of love and in Christian liberty does no harm." Luther adds: "But to enforce them as though obedience were due [to human authority] is damnable." (12:87.)

§ 17. *Good order and a due regard for the rights of all require that the meeting, having been previously announced, be held at a suitable time. Those who fail to appear thereby waive their right of vote. For the sake of love and peace and needful prudence it is advisable that important resolutions concerning matters which admit of postponement should be considered valid only when they have been confirmed in a subsequent meeting.*

The "Ordinance of a Common Chest" for the Church at Leissnig (1523), which was approved in principle by Luther, provided that "a parish-meeting shall be held three times a year, from 11 A. M. to 2 P. M., to hear the report and examine the books of the ten elders (*Vorsteher*) and

to transact other necessary business. . . . No member of the parish should be absent except for weighty reasons, from these three stated meetings." (10:974.)<sup>4)</sup>

§ 18. *An exact record of the important transactions should be made by the secretary, read to the meeting at the close for necessary corrections, and adopted as corrected. These minutes should be again read at the beginning of the subsequent meeting, Acts 15:23-31.*

§ 19. *The pastor opens and closes the meeting with prayer. In case of his absence a prayer is read by a person thereto appointed. Matt. 18:19; Acts 6:4: "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word."*

**B. Of the Performance of the Duty of the Congregation to See that the Word of God may Richly Dwell and Have Free Scope in Its Midst**

§ 20. *The performance of this duty consists, first of all, in the establishment and maintenance of the public ministry in the congregation. Titus 1:5: "For this cause left I thee in Crete that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." Eph. 4:11, 14.*

"The Church has the command to appoint ministers." (Apol. XIII, § 12.) "It is a great blessing for which we need to thank God that He has commanded that the Church itself should choose men for the office of preaching and administering the Sacraments." (Luther, 17:1150.)

§ 21. *In order to perform the highly important act of choosing and calling a minister properly, according to the provisions of God's Word, the congregation proceeds in this wise: Imploring God's blessing and guidance, it secures, if possible, the advice and presence of one or more experienced ministers of the Church, entrusting to them the direction of the public election, Titus 1:5. Cp. Acts*

4) Do not charge the fathers, because of these minute instructions concerning obvious matters, with dealing in trivialities. Nothing is trivial that touches the work of a Christian congregation, of the Church of God. Cp. 1 Cor. 14:26-33.

1:15-26; 6:1-6; 14:23. Every voting member has the right to propose a candidate. Inquiring after the qualifications (1 Tim. 3:2-7: "A bishop, then, must be blameless," etc.; Titus 1:6-9; 2 Tim. 2:15, 24-26) of the persons proposed, the congregation acknowledges those as candidates who have been found eligible and recognizes and accepts the candidate who receives all or a majority of the votes as the person whom God has called through the congregation. The diploma of vocation, approved by the congregation and signed by the proper officials (1 Cor. 16:3), pledges him to adherence to the apostolic and prophetic Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the Word of God, as also to the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and to the faithful administration of the holy office in all its parts (Col. 4:17: "Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it"; cp. Acts 15:23; 26:22; 20:21, 26, 27; 2 Tim. 1:13, 14, 8; 4:2, 5; 1 Pet. 5:1-4) and carries the promise of the congregation to recognize him as its shepherd, teacher, and overseer, to receive as the Word of God the divine word preached by him, to obey him, love him, be at peace with him, honor him, and provide for his sustenance, Luke 10:16; 1 Thess. 5:12; 2:13; Heb. 13:17 ("Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves"); 1 Thess. 5:13; 1 Tim. 5:17; Luke 10:7 ("The laborer is worthy of his hire"); 1 Cor. 9:13, 14; Gal. 6:6. Upon his acceptance of the call he is, according to apostolic usage (1 Tim. 4:14; Acts 6:6; 13:2, 3), ordained or, in the case of an ordained minister, publicly and solemnly installed into his office. (The rite of ordination [installation] is the solemn and public ratification of the call and includes the solemn and public ordination vow.) — Those who would serve in the ministry must be "proved" (examined), 1 Tim. 3:10.

Luther: "The entire community shall have the power to choose and depose the pastor.' This article [of the Swabian peasants] is right. . . . If the rulers are unwilling, then let the communities choose their own pastors and support them with their own property, and let the rulers have their property or else secure it from them in a lawful way." (16:65.) — J. Gerhard: "This pledge does not put



the Symbolical Books on a par with Scripture, nor does it burden the consciences of men. It simply asks for a confession, safeguards the peace of the Church, and blocks the designs of dishonest men."

§ 22. *In order that the Word of God may have free scope in a congregation, public services on Sundays and the customary festivals, as also on certain week-days, especially during Advent and Lent, annual days of humiliation and prayer, harvest-feasts, thanksgiving days, and other holy-days (Luke 11:28: "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it"; Acts 2:46; Heb. 10:24, 25; Acts 2:11), and public catechization of the young (2 Tim. 3:15: "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures"), should be introduced and earnestly, though not as under legal constraint (Gal. 4:10, 11; Col. 2:16, 17: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink or in respect of an holy-day," etc.), observed:*

Augsb. Conf.: "Those who judge that by the authority of the Church the observance of the Lord's Day instead of the Sabbath-day was ordained as a thing necessary do greatly err. . . . Because it was necessary to appoint a certain day that the people might know when they ought to come together, it appeared that the Church designated the Lord's Day for this purpose." (XXVIII, § 58.) Apol.: "With us the pastors and ministers of the Church are compelled publicly (and privately) to instruct and hear the youth." (XV, § 41.)

§ 23. *In order that the Word of God may have full scope in a congregation, it is furthermore incumbent upon the congregation that its members have their children baptized without delay by their minister, as the steward of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1; Mark 10:13 ff.); that they have the youth prepared by him for the full enjoyment of the means of grace and in due time publicly confirmed (Matt. 21:15, 16); that they frequently ask, and receive of him, the comfort of absolution and the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ (John 20:23; 2 Cor. 2:10; 1 Cor. 11:20, 26: "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come") and that after previous exploration and confession (Heb. 13:17:*

*"They watch for your souls as they that must give account"; cp. 1 Cor. 4:1; Matt. 7:6); that they have him publicly solemnize and bless the marriage of the betrothed (1 Cor. 7:39; 1 Tim. 4:3-5); that in sickness and death and other afflictions and tribulations they have him instruct and console them from the Word of God (Jas. 5:14, 15); and, finally, that they give their dead a Christian burial (Acts 8:2).*

Augsb. Conf.: "It is not usual to give the body of the Lord, except to them that have been previously examined and absolved." (XXV.) Luther: "Moreover, the custom is to be preserved that those who wish to commune give notice to the bishop, so that he may know both their names and manner of life. . . . But I think it is sufficient if they be thus examined once a year and those of ripe knowledge and understanding only once—or indeed never. . . . If he see a fornicator, adulterer, drunkard, gamester, usurer, slanderer, and the like, he must exclude such a one absolutely from the Lord's Supper." (*Formula of Mass and Communion* 10:2247 f.)

§ 24. *In order that the Word of God may richly dwell in a congregation, the congregation should furthermore, if possible, establish an Ev. Lutheran school for children and for this purpose call in Christian order an orthodox, godly, and competent teacher (Matt. 18:10; Eph. 6:4: "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"; Gen. 18:19; Deut. 6:6, 7; 2 Tim. 3:15: "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures"; Rom. 2:20), pledge him to adherence to the divine Word of the Old and the New Testament and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, and place him under the supervision of the public ministry (1 John 2:13; Heb. 13:17; Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto . . . all the flocks over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers").*

Luther: "The Evil One inspires carnal and worldly hearts to neglect the children and youth. . . . If a really crushing blow is to be inflicted on him, it must come through the young people, reared in the knowledge of God and spreading and teaching God's Word. God so often

urges and commands that parents should instruct their children. . . . For what other purpose do we older folk exist than to care for, instruct, and bring up the young?" (10:461 ff.) "Do you think that the offices of pastor and school-teacher amount to so little that they cannot be compared with the councils? . . . I speak of school-teachers who not only teach children and young people the arts, but train them in the Christian doctrine and faithfully impress it upon them, and of such pastors as teach God's Word faithfully and purely. They have a precious office and work and are the Church's finest jewels; they preserve the Church. . . . If we cannot have councils, the parishes and schools, small though they are, are perpetual and useful councils." (16:2258 ff.)<sup>5)</sup>

§ 25. *In order that the Word of God may have full scope in a congregation, the congregation should lastly tolerate no divisions by way of conventicles, that is, of meetings for instruction and prayer aside from the divinely ordained public ministry, 1 Cor. 11:18; Jas. 3:1; 1 Cor. 12:29; 14:28; Acts 6:4; Rom. 10:15: "How shall they preach except they be sent?"*

Augsb. Conf.: "No one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called." (XIV.) Luther: "Every pastor has his definite parish; no one else and no stranger shall presume to teach his parishioners, either publicly or privately, without his knowledge and consent. . . . It is God's will that nothing be done by one's own choice or devotion, but everything by command and call." (5, 721.) "How can all things be done decently and in order if every one interfered with another's business and every layman wanted to get up in the church and preach? . . . St. Paul condemns the wicked and wanton spirit that meddles with the official business of another." (20:1673 ff.)

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5) All the other agencies which share with the home and the Christian day-school in the work of Christian education, such as the summer-school, the Sunday-school, the Sunday-school teachers' training-class and institute, young people's society (Bible-study), Bible class, and the like, should receive the fostering care of the congregations.

**C. Of the Performance of the Duty of the Congregation to Care for the Purity of Doctrine and Life and to Exercise Church Discipline in These Matters**

§ 26. *All the members of the congregation must strive to grow, and be enriched, in all utterance and in all knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18; 1 Cor. 1:5) that they may not remain children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14; Heb. 5:12) but try and judge by the Word of God the doctrine preached to them (Acts 17:11: "They searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so"; Matt. 7:15, 16; 1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit but try the spirits whether they are of God"; 1 Cor. 10:15).*

Luther: "Christ takes away from the bishops, theologians, and councils the [exclusive] right and power to judge doctrine and confers it upon all, upon all the Christians, John 10:4, 5, 8. . . . The sheep are to judge whether what they [the bishops, etc.] teach is the voice of Christ or the voice of a stranger." (10:1541.)

§ 27. *The congregation should establish in its midst also the office of such elders as do not labor in the Word and doctrine (1 Tim. 5:17) but assist the minister, who has the office of the Word, in governing the Church and in maintaining discipline and good order (Rom. 12:8: "He that ruleth, with diligence"; 1 Cor. 12:28). What is set down Acts 6:3 ("Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom"); 1 Tim. 3:8-12 concerning the eligibility of deacons (almoners) applies also, and even in a higher degree, in the case of regular elders (wardens).*

Provision concerning the election and duties of ruling elders (*Vorsteher*) are found in the Ordinance of a Common Chest (10:960).

§ 28. *The congregation must see that none but pure church- and schoolbooks, recognized by the orthodox Church, be introduced and tolerated in its midst (1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Tim. 1:13: "Hold fast the form of sound words") and that the confessional ceremonies be retained (Gal. 2:4, 5).*

F. C.: "At the time of confession [when a confession of the heavenly truth is required] . . . then, even in such [things truly of themselves] *adiaphora*, they must not yield to the adversaries or permit these [*adiaphora*] to be forced upon them." (Thor. Decl. X, § 10.)

§ 29. *Such only are to be admitted to membership by the congregation as 1) are baptized (Eph. 5:25, 26; 1 Cor. 12:13); 2) if adults, make profession of their faith that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament are the Word of God and that the doctrine contained in the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, especially in Luther's Small Catechism and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, is the pure Christian doctrine (Gal. 2:4; 2 Cor. 6:14, 15, 17; 2 John 10, 11; Eph. 4:3-6: "One Lord, one faith, one Baptism"); and, 3) lead an unoffensive Christian life (1 Cor. 5:9-13: "If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator or covetous; . . . with such an one no not to eat"; 10:21; Matt. 7:6).*

F. C.: "To this Christian Augsburg Confession, so thoroughly grounded in God's Word, we herewith pledge ourselves again, . . . which pious hearts ought to receive next to the matchless authority of God's Word." (Thor. Decl., Pref., § 4.)

§ 30. *It is the duty of the congregation to investigate in public meeting, according to the Word of God and with hearing of witnesses (2 Cor. 13:1), the cases of those members who are reported as having been disobedient to the Word of God in doctrine or in life and who, having been admonished according to Matt. 18:15, 16 in private as well as in the presence of witnesses, refused to hear the brethren, or of those whose false doctrine or sin is open and known to every one; to convince of their error or sin, and to admonish and reprove, those who have been found guilty (2 Cor. 2:6; 2 Thess. 3:14, 15; 1 Tim. 5:20; Gal. 2:14); publicly to expel from the congregation, excommunicate, through the minister of the Word, pursuant to a unanimous resolution, those who will not hear the congregation and impenitently and obstinately persist in fundamental error or manifest mortal sin (Matt. 18:17-20: "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church;*

but if he neglect to hear the church; let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican"; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; Rom. 16:17: "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them"; Titus 3:10, 11; cp. 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 Tim. 2:17-21); to hold them no longer as brethren, but as heathen men and publicans, deny them the rights of a brother, and sever all fraternal relations with them; and to proceed with Christian discipline against such as refuse to consent to such excommunication (1 Cor. 5:1, 2). But those in whom the excommunication has achieved its purpose and who penitently return the congregation must publicly absolve and readmit (2 Cor. 2:6-11).

"As long as the congregation of saints will not join hands with us, letting the burden rest on the shoulders of the poor preacher alone, no betterment of the times is in sight." (J. Quistorp, Jr.) "Admonish your neighbor privately that he may amend [his life]. Likewise, also, if some one report to you what this or that one has done, teach him, too, to go and admonish him personally if he has seen it himself. . . . 'If he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.' Then you have done a great and excellent work; for do you think it is a little matter to gain a brother? . . . But if that do not avail, then bring it publicly before the community. . . . This is the right and regular course for checking and reforming a wicked person." (Large Catechism, Eighth Commandment.)

§ 31. The congregation is not permitted, and dare not arrogate to itself the right, arbitrarily to depose its minister and others who hold an ecclesiastical office in its midst. But if such men fall away into pernicious error and, having been by due process of investigation (1 Tim. 5:19: "Against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses") found guilty, spurn the admonition of the congregation and of the orthodox ministers who have been called in; or if they stand revealed as obstinately impenitent sinners, or if they have transgressed in such a way that they no longer have "a good report of them which are without" (1 Tim. 3:7) and have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme,—

*the congregation will in Christian order (which may under certain circumstances be that of preliminary suspension) remove them from office as such whom God himself has deposed (Matt. 7:15: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing," etc.; Hos. 4:6; John 10:5).*

The congregation may not depose its pastor arbitrarily. "If Mr. Muehlport is so disposed, the minister in Zwickau can stay; otherwise he must leave. . . . Heathen might do such things, but Christ will not permit Christians to act thus." (Luther, 21 a:1646). Nor may it depose faithful pastors because of weaknesses in doctrine and life. It must not "judge too severely concerning the conduct of teachers. . . . Public harmony cannot last unless pastors and churches mutually overlook and pardon many things." (Apol., III, §§ 113, 122.) "Even though there be something amiss in a sermon, the pious Christian will admonish the preacher, not in a contemptuous and haughty, but in a kind and brotherly spirit." (Luther, 8:1123.) If, however, "the preacher no longer builds up the church, but ruins it through his teaching and conduct, then God himself deposes him (Hos. 4:6; 1 Sam. 2:30), and the church has not only the right, but also the duty to depose him." (M. Chemnitz.)

§ 32. *Lastly, the congregation will see to it that neither the congregation nor any individual member thereof may become guilty of syncretism by entering into ecclesiastical union or fraternal fellowship with unbelievers or such as adhere to false doctrine. (2 Cor. 6:14-18: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. . . . Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate"; 2 John 10, 11: "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not." Cp. Rev. 14:9-11.)*

Apol.: "Impious teachers (*falsche Lehrer*) are not to be received or heard because these do not act any longer in the name of Christ but are antichrists" (Arts. VII, VIII, § 48). Luther: "It shocks one to hear that in one and the same church, at one and the same altar, the two parties [Lutheran and Reformed] should take and receive one and the same Sacrament, with one party believing

that it receives nothing but bread and wine and the other believing that it receives the true body and blood of Christ. And I often ask myself whether it is possible that a preacher and pastor could be so callous and wicked as to tolerate such a thing, to let each party conceive of the Sacrament in its own way and let both parties think that they are receiving the same Sacrament. But if there should be such a pastor, he must have a heart harder than stone, steel, and adamant; he certainly is an apostle of wrath." (*Warning to the People of Frankfurt to Shun Zwinglian Teaching and Teachers*, 17:2016.)

#### **D. Of the Performance of the Duty of the Congregation to Look after the Temporal Welfare of Its Members**

§ 33. *In the first place, it is the duty of the congregation to provide according to its ability for the maintenance of the pastor that he may have food, clothing, and a dwelling for himself and his family (the dwelling to contain a room for study and for meeting his people in undisturbed privacy), Matt. 10:9, 10; that he may have the means of practising hospitality, 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8; that he may be able to live of the Gospel exclusively, 1 Cor. 9:14 ("Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel"); that he be not compelled to neglect his studies, to forego social and fraternal intercourse, or to entangle himself with the affairs of this life, 1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:3, 4; Eccles. 38:26, 27. — This applies also in due measure to the teachers of the young.*

Seb. Schwan writes: "It is not pleasant to say, preach, and write much on this subject. But what should one do?" and quotes Luther on Gal. 6:6 ("Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things"): "I have sometimes marveled why the apostles so urgently enjoined the churches to provide for their teachers. For in Popery I saw that all men gave abundantly to the building of magnificent churches, to the increasing of the revenues and livings of the clerics. . . . But now I know the reason why they had such abundance of good things heretofore and now the pastors and ministers of the Word are in want. Formerly, when nothing else was



taught than errors and wicked things, they had plenty of all things. . . . But now that the Gospel is being preached, its preachers are as rich as sometimes Christ and the apostles were. . . . It is impossible that such as are godly indeed should permit their pastors to suffer want." (9:744 f.)

K. Porta: "For the school-teachers, too, a decent living must be provided, if not by the magistracy, then through the common chest [of the church]. It behooves us to give more liberally for the schools; our neglect of the schools is costing us dearly. The Christian congregations should by rights also have girls' schools, and the schoolmistresses should be paid out of the common chest, mainly because of the children of the poor, who are not able to pay tuition." (Pastorale Lutheri.)

§ 34. *It is likewise the duty of the congregation to provide food, raiment, housing, and other necessities for the poor, the widows and orphans, the aged and infirm, who are unable to procure these themselves and have no relatives whose special duty it would be to make such provision, 2 Thess. 3:11, 12; 1 Tim. 5:16. Cp. 1 John 3:17; Matt. 25:35, 36, 40, 42, 45; Jas. 1:27. The congregation should also relieve the need and distress consequent upon special calamities, such as fire, dearth, famine, robbery, etc. (2 Cor. 8:13, 14: "That now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want"; Rom. 12:15; 1 Cor. 12:26), so that no brother or sister may be tempted to appeal to the mercy of them that are without, to the dishonor of the Gospel, or even to join secret societies for the sake of the aid promised (1 Thess. 4:11, 12).—For these purposes the congregation should appoint special almoners, Acts 6:1–7.*

Luther: "One of our greatest necessities is the abolition of all begging throughout Christendom. Among Christians no one ought to go begging. . . . There would have to be an overseer or warden who knew all the poor. . . . It is enough if the poor are decently cared for so that they do not die of hunger or cold." (10:326 f.)<sup>6)</sup>

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6) Deaconesses, ladies' aid societies, committees for visiting the sick, for placing the unemployed, and the like, serve in this cause. All the members of the congregation must make it their cause.

§ 35. *The congregation must see to it that the sick receive the necessary help, are cared for by day and night, and made comfortable, Matt. 25:36: "I was sick, and ye visited Me"; cp. v. 43; 1 Tim. 5:10: "If she have relieved the afflicted."*

§ 36. *The congregation should make provision for the decent, honorable, and Christian burial of each, even the poorest, of its deceased members, Matt. 14:12; Acts 8:2; Jer. 22:18, 19; Tob. 1:20.*

**E. Of the Performance of the Duty of the Congregation to See that All Its Things be Done Decently and in Order**

§ 37. *In addition to what already has been mentioned incidentally the following points come under this head: The pastor should keep and have in his custody two books, a register containing the names of all the members of the congregation, voting and non-voting members, and the church record, in which he should enter the ministerial acts, baptisms, confirmations, publishing of the banns, marriages, burials, and communions, stating names, dates, places, and other important circumstances. Both books should be furnished by, and remain the property of, the congregation.*

§ 38. *All the papers and documents which concern the congregation or have been directed to it or go out from it should, together with the minutes, be preserved, in the originals, if possible, or in certified copies, by the stated secretary of the congregation.*

§ 39. *The proper management of the financial affairs of the congregation, the collection and payment of salaries, etc., call for the service of a treasurer. For this office a competent person of good Christian character should be appointed. The treasurer should submit monthly or quarterly reports in public meeting, and his accounts should from time to time, at regular and irregular intervals, be carefully audited by a committee appointed for such purpose, 2 Cor. 8:20, 21.*

§ 40. *For the proper care of the poor, the widows and orphans, the aged, infirm, sick, etc., of the congregation almoners should be appointed, who are to see that no one be neglected in the ministration and aid required in each case, Rom. 12:8 ("He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; . . . he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness"); Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:8-13.*

Luther: "In this story you can see what form a Christian congregation should have. . . . If a common chest is to be established, we must learn what offices are needed for the government of the congregation. The bishop is commissioned by God to dispense the divine and spiritual blessings, to preach the Gospel and nourish the people with the Word of God. And he must have assistants; these are *deacons*, who serve the congregation in this way, that they keep a list of the poor, supply their need out of the common chest, visit the sick, and take good care of the church's possessions." (11:2066.)

§ 41. *The congregation should, if it has the means, acquire realty suiting the needs of the congregation, such as a well-equipped church of sufficient size, a schoolhouse, parsonage, burial-ground, etc., and choose men who shall not only represent the congregation as trustees in its dealings with the State in matters of property, but also have the supervision of such property and see that it may not be damaged but kept in good condition and that the necessary improvements and additions, etc., be made.*

Luther: "Do not look at the church-building as the senseless beasts do, seeing only the wood and stones. When the Word is there preached, the Sacraments administered, the ministers ordained and confirmed in their office, then thou shalt say: Here is God's house and the gate of heaven." (2:433.)

§ 42. *The congregation should procure all the requisites for public service, such as a church Bible, hymn-book, liturgy, baptismal and Communion vessels, official vestments, etc., and appoint a sexton who is to have them in custody, keep the church clean and in proper order, make the necessary preparations for Baptism and Communion,*

and render other services to the pastor during public worship. The pews should not be rented, but special seats should be assigned to those who hold an office in the congregation, and a sacristy should be provided for the pastor.

§ 43. The time of opening for all the meetings of the congregation should be definitely fixed and strictly observed.

§ 44. In the meetings of the congregation no important matter should be put to a vote at once, without previous discussion, explanation, and deliberation.

§ 45. As a rule, all matters not determined, enjoined or prohibited, by the Word of God, should be decided by a majority vote,—a rule which “nature teaches,” 1 Cor. 11:14. But if it should become apparent that forcing the decision of the majority might, because of the infirmity of many, cause a breach or some other harm, the majority should, for the sake of love and peace, yield to the minority, 2 Cor. 10:8.

§ 46. The chairman of the assembly must enforce the rule that but one speaker may speak at a time, 1 Cor. 14:30, and only after the previous speaker has finished, so that every one has an opportunity to express his opinion and the discussion does not turn into a brawl, 1 Cor. 11:16.

§ 47. Before taking the votes at an election, the roll of the voting members should be called and those answering cast their vote at once, absent voters being permitted to vote by ballot only.

§ 48. All citations to appear in the meeting of the congregation should be in writing and be delivered by a responsible person.

§ 49. All those who, besides the pastor, hold an office in the congregation should be under a written instruction drawn up by the congregation and precisely determining the extent and limits of their powers. Every member should, if able, be willing to accept an office for which he

has been chosen. 1 Pet. 4:10, 11: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."<sup>7)</sup>

Luther: "When the people urge and constrain me and I can do it, even though I cannot do just all that is asked of me, I shall do as much as I can. When this command (Lev. 19:18) is held before me and lays hold of me, there is an end to demurring and refusing — unless I wanted to keep on refusing until I incurred God's displeasure." (3:721.)

§ 50. If the congregation adopts a written constitution, the latter should contain only what is most necessary and has already stood the test of congregational life, and no provision therein embodied concerning things neither enjoined nor prohibited in the Word of God should be unalterable, but all such provisions should be subject to alteration or repeal at any time, in due order, and by a considerable majority.

Luther's advice on this matter: "Go slow, and after this wise: kurz und gut, wenig und wohl, sachte und immer an. Let these regulations first take root; you can always add what is found to be necessary." (21a:915.)

§ 51. While every member of the congregation must recognize his duty to contribute his proportional share to the maintenance of church and school and the support of the needy members (Matt. 10:10; 1 Cor. 9:41; 2 Cor. 8:12: "According to that a man hath and not according to that he hath not"), it must be left to the conscience and the voluntary charity of every one to determine how much he should give in proportion, 2 Cor. 9:7: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give: not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver."

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7) The functions of various church offices, established by "the congregation of God according to its circumstances" (F. C. Trigl., p. 829), of the school board, the Sunday-school superintendent, the ushers, the membership committee, etc., are treated in Th. Graebner's *Handbook for Congregational Officers*.

Christian giving is "regulated not by laws but by love. Love knows how much to give." (Luther, 3:452.) — "Let the Christian beware lest he use this Christian liberty to hide miserable stinginess." (10:974.)

**F. Of the Performance of the Duty of the Congregation to Endeavor to Keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Love and Peace Also with Other Parts of the Orthodox Church**

§ 52. *The congregation should be diligent in jointly offering prayer for all saints, Eph. 6:18.*

§ 53. *As every true Ev. Lutheran local congregation has the same public confessions of faith with the entire Ev. Lutheran Church, so it should also give all diligence to be one with it in point of life and to "speak the same thing, in the same mind, and in the same judgment," 1 Cor. 1:10.*

Preface to the Book of Concord: "We have determined not to depart even a finger's breadth from the subjects themselves or from the phrases which are found in them," the Confessions.

§ 54. *Each congregation should come to an agreement with the adjacent congregations concerning the local limits of their respective territories (Titus 1:5; Gal. 2:9), and no congregation should receive as members those who reside in the territory of other congregations, 1 Pet. 4:15; 5:2 ("Feed the flock of God which is among you"); Heb. 10:25.<sup>8)</sup>*

§ 55. *The congregation should demand from those who come to it from other orthodox congregations a testimonial*

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8) This policy of fixing the boundaries of the parish along geographical lines, which "is a matter of human agreement and law" (*Opinion of the Wittenberg Faculty*) is meant to subserve, and admirably does subserve, the Scriptural principle that "a pastor is not permitted to officiate, either publicly or privately, in the parish of another pastor, except by consent of the latter." (Same faculty.) When congregations, because of changed conditions, and in the exercise of Christian liberty, agree on a different policy, they are still bound by the underlying principle, that of the inviolability of the parish rights.

(letter of dismissal) issued by the latter and recognize such testimonial. And it should give such testimonials to those who remove to other congregations, Acts 18:27; 3 John 8-10.

§ 56. The congregation should not receive as members such as have been rightfully excommunicated by orthodox congregations, 1 Tim. 1:20; cp. 2 Tim. 4:14, 15.

§ 57. The congregation should receive as brethren such as have been exiled or have been wrongfully excommunicated or come as guests from other congregations and care for them as for their own members, 1 Pet. 4:9 ("Use hospitality one to another without grudging"); Heb. 13:2; Rom. 16:1, 2; 1 Cor. 16:10, 11; John 16:2; cp. 9:22-39.—Matt. 25:35.

§ 58. If the congregation calls the pastor of another congregation, it should ask the latter to give its consent to the pastor's accepting the call, endeavoring to bring about a mutual agreement as to its being a divine call. If its pastor is called to another congregation, it should examine such call according to the Word of God and willingly release the pastor if the call appears as being of God, 1 Tim. 3:13.

§ 59. In grave cases a congregation should seek the advice of one or several sister congregations and, when asked for such advice, be ready to give it according to its ability. Cp. Acts 15.

§ 60. The congregation should regard the distress of sister congregations as its own and give them all the aid and assistance possible, 1 Cor. 16:1, 2 ("Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, so do ye"); 2 Cor. 8:1-14; 9:1-15.

§ 61. The congregation should be willing to have its minister, if at all possible, serve as an affiliated charge a neighboring congregation which cannot by itself establish the ministry in its midst nor be merged with the main congregation.

**G. Of the Performance of the Duty of the Congregation to Do Its Part in Building Up, and Fostering, the Church at Large**

§ 62. *The congregation should see that gifted boys and young man be consecrated to the service of the Church and that they be enabled to prepare themselves for such service, 1 Cor. 12:7.*

Luther: "Let him who can, watch; and wherever the government [the Church] sees a promising boy, let him be sent to school. If the father is poor, let the church help with its resources. Let the rich make their wills with this work in view, as some have done, who have endowed stipends. . . . That would be a praiseworthy, Christian testament, which would please and delight God and for which He would bless and honor you by giving you pleasure and joy in Him." (10:459.)

§ 63. *The congregation should make provision that the Bread of Life be broken to such of its brethren in the faith as suffer spiritual want and should therefore support those who are performing this work of love, Acts 11:21, 22.*

§ 64. *The congregation should zealously engage in the work of Bible distribution, 1 Thess. 3:27; Col. 4:16; cp. 1 Thess. 1:8.*

§ 65. *The congregation should join in the work of bringing the Gospel to those who still sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to the poor heathen and Jews, Matt. 28: 18-20 ("Teach all nations"); 1 Pet. 2:9 ("Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"); 2 Cor. 11:8; cp. Acts 13:1-5.<sup>9)</sup>*

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9) *Proceedings, Western District, 1862 (p. 14): "Paragraph 11: 'It is incumbent upon the congregation to do its part in building up, and fostering, the Church at large.' Luther: 'If we remained apart and separate, Christendom could not be extended and preserved. Therefore Christ binds us together in this divine community in order that the Gospel may spread farther and farther and others be brought into the fold through our*



§ 66. *The congregation should be ready to unite with the Ev. Lutheran congregations of this country when there is opportunity for such union and this tends to serve and promote the glory of God and the upbuilding of His kingdom, Eph. 4:3-6 ("Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"); 1 Cor. 12:7 ("The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal"). Cp. Acts 15.*

Huelsemann: "It is of the greatest value that . . . congregations, whether they be located in one or more provinces or countries, form synods for keeping the individual churches in the unity of the confession and maintaining strict morals." (*Breviarium*, 1640.) Luther: "What a divine, wholesome thing it is to have the pastors and Christian congregations visited by wise and capable persons both the Old and New Testament sufficiently show. . . . Although we must not impose this [*the Instruction to the Visitors*] as a binding law . . . , still we hope, that all godly, peaceable pastors will submit to such visitations, willingly, without coercion, in and for the sake of love. . . . Therefore let us watch and take good care that we may keep the spiritual unity (as St. Paul admonishes) in the bond of love and peace. Amen." (10:1628 ff.) TH. E.

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confession.' (11:982 f.) This clearly shows that Luther would have the Church engage in the work of home and foreign missions. . . . It is certainly the duty of every congregation zealously to help along in this work. The least it can do is to permit its pastor to do mission-work in the vicinity. . . . It is to be deplored that so many of our congregations are too selfish in this regard. . . . Many of our congregations are not alive to their missionary obligation; witness the fact that, while there is a great lack of preachers with us, every little congregation which could easily be served together with the neighboring congregation must have its own pastor."

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## **“The Evangelical Lutheran Church the True Visible Church of God on Earth”<sup>1)</sup>**

In the one year of 1520 Luther wrote three monumental works: *To the Christian Nobility*, *The Babylonian Captivity*, and *The Liberty of a Christian Man*.

Principal Henry Ware of King's College, London, says: “It is but recognizing a historical fact to designate them ‘first principles of the Reformation.’ From them, and by means of them, the whole of the subsequent movement was worked out. . . . It ought never to be forgotten that for the assertion of the principles themselves we, like the rest of Europe, are indebted to the genius and the courage of Luther.”

The American Luther also wrote three monumental works: *Church and Ministry*, *The Proper Form of a Lutheran Free Church*, and *The Evangelical Lutheran Church the True Visible Church of God on Earth*. These also may be called “first principles.” From them, and by means of them, the whole of the subsequent movement of “Missouri” was worked out. And many men in many lands have gratefully acknowledged their deep indebtedness to Dr. Walther. The last work was heard and published by resolution of the Synod at St. Louis in 1868.

In the midst of skepticism, rationalism, indifferentism, confusion, and unionism, what an arresting challenge! Here was a man who also believed, and therefore also spoke, spoke with a voice clear as a clarion. The trumpet gave no uncertain sound, and men prepared for war. His theses stand out in the simple beauty and rugged strength of Doric columns with flaming beacons and show the highway, so that wayfaring man, yea, fools, shall not err therein.

What they may see in this treatise is:

### **The Glory of the Lutheran Church**

Translating the Old Testament, Luther found it hard to make the old Jews talk German; we also find it hard to make the very German Walther speak English.

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1) *Die Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche die wahre sichtbare Kirche Gottes auf Erden.*

The Church is defined in

THESIS I ✓

*The one holy Christian Church on earth, or the Church in the proper sense of the word, outside of which there is no salvation, is, according to God's Word, the total of all that truly believe in Christ and are sanctified through this faith.*

The proof of this truth is given from Scripture. Christ says: "On this rock I will build My Church." This rock is Christ, says Paul. Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:19-22. See also Eph. 5:23, 27; Heb. 3:6.

And so only believers and all believers in Christ are built upon Christ and are the true Church of Christ.

This Bible truth is taught by the Confessions of the Ev. Lutheran Church. The Augsburg Confession says: "The one holy Christian Church is the congregation of all believers." (Art. VII. Large Catechism, Art. III. Smalcald Articles, III:12.)

And thus the great teachers of the Lutheran Church, from Luther (see for instance, 16:2269) down to Walther.<sup>2)</sup>

How broad-minded! How comforting!

Now, where do I find this true Church of true believers? The answer is given in

THESIS II

*Though the one holy Christian Church, as a spiritual temple, cannot be seen but only believed, yet there are infallible outward marks by which its presence is known; which notes are the pure preaching of God's Word and the unadulterated administration of the holy Sacraments.*

This is proved from Scripture. Peter calls the Christians a spiritual temple, built of living stones, and a spiritual priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. 2:5. And Paul says: "The Lord knoweth them that are His," 2 Tim. 2:19.

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2) Under this thesis Walther quotes, beside Luther, Calov, Gerhard, Quenstedt, Dannhauer, J. B. Carpzov, Baier; and under the following theses 15 more Lutheran theologians. Among the writers quoted only in this treatise are Arcularius, Bechmann, C. J. Hofmann, Pfeiffer, and Rambach.

We sow the seed when we preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments. *How* it grows we do not know; we do know it *will* grow, for the Lord tells us so, Mark 4:26-29; Is. 55:10, 11; Matt. 28:18, 19; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27.

This is the teaching of the Lutheran Church. The Augsburg Confession says the one holy Christian Church is the congregation of believers, "in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered." (Art. 7. Apology, Art. 7.)

Luther (18:1464 ff.) and the others are in full agreement.

We need heed

### THESIS III

*Scripture in an improper sense calls churches also all visible congregations which have hypocrites and wicked among the believers but preach the Gospel right and administer the Sacraments according to the Gospel.*

Christ says: "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican," Matt. 18:17. That visible body is called a "church" though it had an offender. The visible congregation at Corinth had wicked people, and yet it is called a "church of God," 1 Cor. 1:2; 5:1-6.

The Lutheran Church teaches the same. The Augsburg Confession says the Church proper is the congregation of saints and true believers; yet in this life many false Christians and hypocrites are among them. (Art. VIII.)

The Formula of Concord condemns the false article of the Anabaptists: That is not a true Christian congregation in which sinners are still found. (Epitome, Art. XII:7.) — Luther, 6:1628.

Another step is taken in

### THESIS IV

*Scripture calls churches even the visible congregations guilty of a partial lapse from the true doctrine, as long as they hold God's Word essentially.*

In the visible congregations of Galatia some would be "justified by the Law," and Paul tells them: "Ye are

fallen from grace." And yet he calls them "churches," Gal. 1:2; 3:1; 5:4.

And so teaches the Lutheran Church in the Formula of Concord, Introduction to the Book of Concord of 1580, and in the Apology, Art. 24.

So Luther (9:42 ff.) and the others.

A most serious matter is brought up in

#### THESIS V

*Communions still holding God's Word essentially but erring obstinately in fundamentals; IN SO FAR as they do so, are, according to God's Word, not churches but schisms or sects, i. e., heretical communions.*

Paul writes: "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself," Titus 3:10, 11. Again: "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them," Rom. 16:17, 18. See also 2 Tim. 2:17, 18; Acts 20:29, 30; 1 Cor. 11:18, 19; 2 Pet. 2:1, 2; 2 Thess. 2:4, 7; Rev. 2:24.

This Biblical truth is taught by the Lutheran Church. The Apology says the Fathers at times built wood, hay, stubble, on the foundation, but they did not destroy the foundation, 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Cor. 3:12. But most of those errors which our adversaries defend, overthrow faith. Although wolves and wicked teachers rage in the Church, yet they are not properly the kingdom of Christ. (Apology, Art. 7. *Triglotta*, pp. 233, 235.)

So Luther (for instance, 16:2182), etc.

#### THESIS VI

*Communions destroying the unity of the Church for non-fundamental errors or personalities or ceremonies or wicked life, according to God's Word are schismatic or separatistic communions.*

So the Bible teaches.

Paul writes: "I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you that they which are approved may be made

manifest among you," 1 Cor. 11:18, 19; 1:12. See also Heb. 10:23, 25; 1 John 2:19.

So the Lutheran Church teaches.

The Apology says: We are to beware of false prophets but not cause schisms or divisions, as the Donatists have done, though priests and people do not everywhere lead a Christian life. (Art. VIII, pp. 237, 245, in *Triglotta*.)

#### THESIS VII

*Communion calling themselves Christian but not accepting God's Word as God's Word and therefore denying the Triune God, according to God's Word are no churches but synagogs of Satan and temples of idols.*

Scripture-proof.

People are made disciples by Baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Matt. 28:19.

"Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father," 1 John 2:23; 5:20, 21; Rev. 2:9.

Without Christ men are without hope and without God in the world, Eph. 2:12.

So teaches the Lutheran Church. The Apology calls the deniers of the Holy Trinity "idolaters," who "insult God." (Art. I, p. 103. *Triglotta*.)

See, for instance, Luther, 9:44.

An important distinction is made in

#### THESIS VIII

*Though church-writers sometimes call communions holding God's Word essentially true, i. e., real, churches over against non-churches, yet over against erring churches, or sects, a true visible Church in the absolute sense is that only in which God's Word is preached right and the holy Sacraments are administered in accordance with the Gospel.*

Christ says: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," John 8:31, 32; 10:3-5.

Paul bids us "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," Eph. 4:3-6. Again: "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye

all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment," 1 Cor. 1:10.

So the Lutheran Church. The Augsburg Confession, Art. VII. Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, Art. X. — Luther, 17:1341.

### THESIS IX

*Though according to the divine promises it is not possible for the one holy Christian Church ever to perish, it is yet possible, and at times it has really happened, that there did not exist a true VISIBLE Church in the absolute sense, in which through an uncorrupted public ministry the preaching of the pure Word of God and the administration of the unadulterated Sacraments held sway.*

In Elijah's time there was no true visible Church; but God still had left seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knees to Baal, 1 Kings 19:1-18.

Paul foretold the coming of Antichrist sitting in the temple of God with signs and lying wonders, 2 Thess. 2:1-12. Christ foretold the rise of false Christs and false prophets, and they "shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect," Matt. 24:24; Luke 18:8; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 4:3, 4; Rev. 12:6.

So the true visible Church is not the same as the one holy Christian Church. So the Lutheran Church. The Apology says under the papacy the true visible Church was lost, yet the one holy Christian Church remained. (Arts. VII, XXIV.)

### THESIS X

*The Ev. Lutheran Church is the total of all unreservedly confessing agreement with the pure Word of God, of the teaching brought again to light through Luther's reformation and delivered summarily in writing to Kaiser and Reich at Augsburg in 1530 and repeated and expanded in the other so-called Lutheran symbols.*

When the question arose, what is Lutheran? the Formula of Concord accepted the three General Creeds, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, and Luther's two Catechisms because taken out of Scrip-

ture, by which all other writings are to be judged. (Thorough Declaration, Of the Comprehensive Summary. *Triglotta*, pp. 851, 853, 855.)

Luther said: "We must confess the teaching delivered at Augsburg is the true and pure Word of God. All believing and living after the teaching of the Confession and Apology are our brethren, members of the true Church." (16:1538.)

A common error is corrected in

#### THESIS XI

*The Ev. Lutheran Church is not the one holy Christian Church outside of which there is no salvation, though it has never separated from the same but acknowledges it alone.*

The Book of Concord of 1580 cheerfully admits there are many godly persons in those churches which have hitherto not agreed with us in all things. (Introduction. *Triglotta*, p. 19.)

So Luther (17:2212, 2791, etc.) and the Lutheran theologians.

We come to a very important point in

#### THESIS XII

*If the Ev. Lutheran Church has the marks of pure Gospel-preaching and unadulterated administration of the holy Sacraments, then it is the true visible Church of God on earth.*

See under Thesis VIII.

The truth of this bold claim is proved in

#### THESIS XIII

*The Ev. Lutheran Church recognizes the written Word of the apostles and prophets as the only and perfect source, rule, norm, and judge of all teaching — a. not reason, b. not tradition, c. not new revelations.*

Deut. 4:2; Josh. 23:6; Is. 8:20; Luke 16:29; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 1 Cor. 1:21; 2:4, 5, 15; Col. 2:8; Matt. 15:9.

That is the teaching of the Lutheran Church. The



Formula of Concord, Comprehensive Summary. *Triglotta*, pp. 851, 853, 855. The Smalcald Articles declare: "The Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel." II:2. (*Triglotta*, p. 467.) — Luther, 15:1935, 1670.

Human reason as a source of knowledge in religion is rejected by the Apology, Art. IV, and by the Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration, Art. II. (*Triglotta*, p. 883.)

Tradition is rejected as a source of religious knowledge by the Apology, Art. XII, and the Smalcald Articles, II:2. (Luther, 15:1926; 19:958.)

New revelations are rejected as a source of religious knowledge in the Smalcald Articles, III:8; II:2.

#### THESIS XIV

*The Ev. Lutheran Church holds fast to the clearness of Scripture. (There are no "views" and "open questions.")*

The psalmist says: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path," Ps. 119:105. Peter calls it "a more sure Word, a light that shineth in a dark place," 2 Pet. 1:19. Paul calls it "the light of the glorious Gospel," 2 Cor. 4:3, 4.

So Luther, 5:334; 18:1681 ff.

#### THESIS XV

*The Ev. Lutheran Church acknowledges no HUMAN interpreter of Scripture whose interpretation must be received as infallible and binding on account of his office — 1. not an individual, 2. not an order, 3. not a particular or general council, 4. not a whole Church (nicht eine ganze Kirche).*

Peter forbids private interpretation of Scripture, 2 Pet. 1:20. The interpreter must show that his interpretation is not his own but that of the Holy Spirit.

Luther says: "When they apply the 'rock' in Matt. 16:18 to Peter, that is a private interpretation, and it is not to be believed. They cannot prove from Scripture that Peter is the Pope. But we can prove that the 'rock' is Christ. This interpretation is right, taken from God's Word." (9:1362.)

# THESIS XVI

*The Ev. Lutheran Church accepts God's Word as it interprets itself.*

See under Thesis XV.

## A

*The Ev. Lutheran Church lets the original text alone decide.*

Pfeiffer: "This must be maintained over against the papists, who ascribe canonical authority to their Latin version, the Vulgate."

Luther: "As dearly as we love the Gospel, so zealously we must cherish the languages. For God had a purpose in giving the Scriptures only in two languages, the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in the Greek," etc. (10:470.)

## B

*The Ev. Lutheran Church, in the interpretation of the words and sentences, holds fast to the usage of language.*

Melanchthon finely observed: Scripture cannot be understood theologically if not first understood grammatically. Cp. Luther, 18:1820.

## C

*The Ev. Lutheran Church acknowledges only the literal sense as the true sense.*

With allegory you can prove anything from everything. Cp. Luther, 3:1389 f.

## D

*The Ev. Lutheran Church holds the literal sense has but one sense.*

If it has a fourfold sense, you'll never be sure of any sense, says Pfeiffer. See Luther, 18:1307; 4:1304 f.

## E

*The Ev. Lutheran Church, in interpreting, is guided by the context and the intention. Otherwise the Scripture is garbled.*

Apology: "Passages, when produced in their entirety, very frequently bring the interpretation with them." (Art. III, § 159.)

## F

*The Ev. Lutheran Church acknowledges the literal sense may be the improper sense as well as the proper; but it does not depart from the proper sense unless forced by Scripture itself — either the circumstances of the text itself or a parallel passage or the analogy of faith.*

## G

*The Ev. Lutheran Church interprets the dark passages by the clear ones.*

## H

*The Ev. Lutheran Church takes the articles of faith from the texts constituting the seat of doctrine and judges all obiter dicta accordingly.*

## I

*The Ev. Lutheran Church rejects out of hand every interpretation not in harmony with the analogy of faith, Rom. 12:7.*

Apology, Art. XXVII, § 60: "Examples ought to be interpreted according to the rule, i. e., according to certain and clear passages of Scripture."

## THESIS XVII

*The Ev. Lutheran Church accepts the whole written Word of God (as God's Word), deems nothing in it superfluous or of little worth but everything needful and important, and also accepts all teaching deduced of necessity from the word of Scripture.*

Matt. 5:18, 19; Rev. 22:18, 19; Matt. 22:29-32.

Luther, 20:775.

## THESIS XVIII

*The Ev. Lutheran Church gives to each teaching of God's Word the place and importance it has in God's Word itself.*

## A

*It makes the teaching concerning Christ, or justification, the foundation and marrow and guiding star of all teaching.*

1 Cor. 3:11; 2:2; 15:3; Rev. 19:10.

Augsburg Confession, Arts. XXVI, § 4; XXVII, § 48.

B

*The Ev. Lutheran Church distinguishes sharply between the Law and the Gospel.*

John 1:17; Rom. 10:4; 2 Tim. 2:15.

Form. of Conc., Epit., V, § 2. Luther, 9:806.

C

*The Ev. Lutheran Church distinguishes sharply between the fundamental and the non-fundamental articles of doctrine contained in Scripture.*

1 Cor. 3:11-15.

D

*The Ev. Lutheran Church distinguishes sharply between what God's Word commands and what it leaves free. (Things indifferent [adiaphora], church government.)*

Matt. 23:8; Gal. 5:1; 2 Cor. 8:8; 1 Cor. 9:19.

Augsb. Conf., Art. VII.

E

*The Ev. Lutheran Church distinguishes as sharply as cautiously between the Old and the New Testament.*

Gal. 4:1-5, 7; Col. 2:16, 17.

THESIS XIX

*The Ev. Lutheran Church accepts no teaching as an article of faith which is not contained in God's Word and is therefore not absolutely sure and certain.*

Heb. 11:1; Titus 1:9; 2 Pet. 1:19.

Apology: "There are many good men to whom this doubt is more bitter than death. You do not consider sufficiently how great a subject religion is if you think that good men are in anguish for a slight cause whenever they begin to doubt concerning any dogma." (Art. VI, § 31.) Luther, 8:1003; 18:1678 f.

THESIS XX

*The Ev. Lutheran Church prizes the gift of interpreting Scripture as given by God to individuals, 1 Cor. 12:4, 7, 8, 10, 30; 14:32; 1 Thess. 5:20.*

Melanchthon writes: "I remember Erasmus used to say, 'There is no abler and better interpreter than Luther among all whose writings we have since the apostles.'" (Walch, 14:539 f.)

#### THESIS XXI

*A. The Ev. Lutheran Church is sure that the teaching contained in its Symbols is the pure God's truth because it agrees with the written Word of God in all points.*

Smalc. Art., Preface, § 10. Augsb. Conf., Art. XXI, F. C. Trigl., p. 850, 854.

*B. The Ev. Lutheran Church requires its members and especially its teachers unreservedly to confess and vow fidelity to its symbols.*

Book of Concord. Trigl., p. 20.

*C. The Ev. Lutheran Church rejects all fraternal and churchly fellowship with those who reject its Confessions in whole or in part.*

2 Cor. 6:14-18; 2 John 10, 11; Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10; Eph. 4:3-5.

Apology, Art. VII; Art. VIII, § 48. F. C., Thor. Decl., Art. X, § 5; Art. VII, § 33. Luther, 17:667; 5:977.

#### THESIS XXII

*The Ev. Lutheran Church administers the holy Sacraments after the institution of Christ.*

Luther, 17:1322.

#### THESIS XXIII

*True Ev. Lutheran churches are those only in which the teaching of the Ev. Lutheran Church, as laid down in its Symbols, is not only acknowledged officially but is also in vogue in the public preaching, Jer. 8:8; Matt. 10:32 f.*

Luther, 16:2275.

#### THESIS XXIV

*The Ev. Lutheran Church holds fellowship in confession and charity with all at one with it in faith, Eph. 4:3.*

F. C., Epit. X, § 7. Luther, 16:1538.

## THESIS XXV

*The Ev. Lutheran Church has thus all the essential marks of the true visible Church of God on earth as they are found in no other known communion, and therefore it needs no reformation in doctrine.*

Luther: "The whole world wonders and must confess that we have the Gospel just as purely as the apostles had it and that it has altogether attained to its original purity, far beyond what it was in the days of Jerome and Augustine." (10:471.) "We on our part have never asked for a council that it should reform our Church. We have the Word pure, Baptism pure, the Sacrament pure, the keys pure, and all that belongs to the right Church we have holy and pure, without the addition and adulteration of men's teaching. The life indeed, as we stated above, does not perfectly measure up to it. That we deplore, as did the prophets and apostles. That will reach perfection in heaven." (17:1350.)

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*Q. E. D. What a grand finale!*

The great Greek Thucydides wrote: "My history is for all time." The great Roman Horace wrote: "I have erected a monument." Dr. Walther erected a monument for all time. The champion of his King has thrown down his gauntlet to all the world, but so far no one has come to take up the gage.

"God was with us; God be with us."

W. D.

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## SYNOPTIC REVIEW

Prepared by Dr. F. Pfotenhauer, chairman of the Saxon Immigration Centennial Committee. This material is suggested for synodical and conference essays and for sermons. Translation by S. M.

### THE VOICE OF OUR CHURCH ON THE QUESTION CONCERNING THE CHURCH AND THE MINISTRY

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2. The blessings and treasures of the Church. The keys of the kingdom of heaven. Thesis IV; p. 58.

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The Ev. Lutheran Church accepts no teaching as an article of faith which is not contained in God's Word and is therefore not absolutely sure and certain. Thesis XIX; p.126.

She prizes the gift of interpreting Scriptures. Thesis XX; p. 126.

4. A. and B. She takes the proper attitude to the Symbols of the Church. Thesis XXI; p.127.

C. She rejects unionism.

5. She administers the holy Sacraments in accordance with Christ's institution. Thesis XXII; p.127.

6. Those only are orthodox churches in which correctness of doctrine and practise is found. Thesis XXIII; p.127.

She holds fellowship with all who are one with her in faith. Thesis XXIV; p.127.

*Conclusion.* — All essential marks of the true visible Church of God on earth are found in the Evangelical Lutheran Church; she at the present time is the only true visible Church of God on earth. Thesis XXV; p.128.

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(Prepared by REV. S. MICHAEL)

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